LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE ROSH HASHANAH

BY

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

ESSAYS ON ROSH HASHANAH

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Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who, more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption

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B"H

INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *Rosh Hashanah* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 23 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

"The time of your Redemption has arrived."

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our

understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus*/exile mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

ESSAY ONE

HEARING THE SOUNDS OF SINAI

Even if G-d declared that the doors were shut for us, it only meant that we was expected to do a more energetic Teshuvah and thereby "break down" the barriers that would not let us enter G-d's domain.

According to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (*Kedushas Levi-Tavo*), we could not just rely on heavenly voices to do Teshuvah, we have to generate our return on our own.

ESSAY ONE

HEARING THE SOUNDS OF SINAI

Redundancy

Parshas Nitzavim always precedes Rosh Hashanah. This implies that there is an organic connection between this parsha and the New Year that commences with Rosh Hashanah, the Ten Days of Teshuvah and Yom Kippur. The obvious connection between Nitzavim and these Days of Awe is that their central theme is Teshuvah, often translated as "repentance", and more precisely as "return."

In this week's parsha the Torah states:

> "...when all these things come upon you among all the nations where G-d your G-d, has banished you—the blessing and the curse which I have set before you—you will take it to your heart, and **you will return to G-d,** your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul. You will listen to His voice, to everything that I am commanding you today, you and your children. Then G-d will return your captives..."

The key words in this section are: "You will return to G-d your G-d... you will listen to His voice."

One can ask what the Torah means when it says "you will listen to His voice?" If listening to G-d's voice simply means to follow His commandments it would be redundant, for listening to G-d's commandments is mentioned explicitly in this verse. Why is there is a need to state both "you will listen to His voice" and "to everything that I am commanding you"? It could have stated: "You will listen to His commandments."

An answer to this question can be given by using a novel approach to understanding what it means to "listen to G-d's voice." It is not simply a reference to complying with the commandments. Rather, it refers to hearing a heavenly voice that emanates from Mount Sinai, which is a prelude to listening to the commandants.

Return, Except Acher

The Talmud (Chagigah 15a) relates the tragic and rather unusual story of a great Sage, Elisha ben Avuyah, who became a renegade. He flouted Jewish law and brazenly violated the most fundamental teachings of the Torah. As a result of his transformation into an apostate, he was nicknamed "Acher—the Other One."

Rabbi Meir, one of his loyal disciples, decided not to abandon him and continued to study under him. The Talmud states that Rabbi Meir knew how to distinguish the

good from the bad. He likened his learning from Acher to one who eats a fruit and spits out the peel and the pit.

The Talmud relates that one Shabbos, as Acher was riding his horse (a forbidden activity on the Sabbath), Rabbi Meir walked alongside him and listened to Acher expound the teachings of the Torah. At a certain point, Acher reminded Rabbi Meir that he had reached the limit (2,000 cubits) a Jew may walk outside of the city limits on Shabbos so that he would return. Rabbi Meir took Acher's literal suggestion of returning and challenged Acher to return in the figurative sense of the word and do Teshuvah.

Acher's response was, "Everyday there is a heavenly voice that emerges from Sinai that states, "Return, errant children. When I hear that voice it is stated with a caveat: 'except for Acher'!" Acher was convinced that he had transgressed so egregiously that all the doors for his return had been shut.

In truth, Chassidic thought teaches us that even Acher was not beyond salvation. Even if G-d declared that the doors were shut for him, it only meant that he was expected to do a more energetic Teshuvah and thereby "break down" the barriers that would not let him enter G-d's domain. According to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (*Kedushas Levi-Tavo*), he could not rely on heavenly voices to do Teshuvah, he had to generate his return on his own.

What emerges from this Talmudic discussion is that G-d generates a voice from Sinai that admonishes us to do Teshuvah and return to Him.

Who Hears the voice?

The Ba'al Shem Tov asked an obvious question:

If most people who are in need of doing Teshuvah don't hear this voice that emerges from Sinai, of what avail is it? And those spiritually advanced people that do hear the voice don't need it.

The Ba'al Shem Tov answered that while our conscious mind does not hear this voice, the part of the soul that is not cloaked within our body does indeed hear the voice emerging from Sinai and relays its subliminal message to the conscious mind. When this occurs we feel inspired, if only for a few seconds, and we [will] harbor thoughts of Teshuvah. So whenever we feel inspired, especially when the inspiration is spontaneous, it is a sign that our soul has just heard that heavenly voice.

Muted

There are times, however, when even the echoes of Sinai are muted. The combined effect of our physical bodies, animal souls, materialistic pursuits and indulgences,

transgressions and the very phenomenon of being in a stifling exile can so stifle and mute the sounds of Sinai that we don't even entertain fleeting feelings of Teshuvah.

How do we overcome this desensitization process?

The answer is provided in the verses that were cited above.

> "...when all these things come upon you among all the nations where G-d your G-d, has banished you—the blessing and the curse which I have set before you—you will take it to your heart, and you will return to G-d, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul. You will listen to His voice..."

Feeling the pain and the curses of exile empowers us to break through the resistance that we have developed and allows for the free flow of our soul's inspiration into our consciousness.

To be sure, we do not ask for pain and suffering or for the extension of the exile, G-d forbid. On the contrary, all of our prayers are punctuated with the most heartfelt pleas to G-d to end the suffering. But yet, after the fact, we should recognize that the "silver lining" and hidden blessing in all of the past travail is that it helps us break our resistance to hearing the sounds of Sinai.

Preferably, it is the blessings that we experience that shine G-d's light on us and illuminate our paths so that we can hear the sounds of Sinai. If we fail to see the G-dly light in

the blessings, the curses of the past will have to break through our resistant exterior.

This then is what the Torah means when it talks about "listening to G-d's voice." This is the voice of Sinai that can now be felt and is what stirs us to do Teshuvah.

A Tighter Connection To Rosh Hashanah

We can now detect an even tighter connection between this week's parsha and Rosh Hashanah. Not only are they connected through the theme of Teshuvah, they are also linked by the notion of how jolting helps us obtain a clearer and crisper reception of the sounds of Sinai.

This week's parsha speaks of how the pressures of exile, with its attendant curses, pierces through the resistant armor that blocks our ability to receive a clear signal from our soul. Likewise, according to Maimonides, the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is intended, among other objectives, to jolt us out of our reverie. Once we are awake and alert, we can then hear the daily sounds that emanate from Sinai. Moreover, we then connect with the sounding of the Shofar that accompanied the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, which is yet another objective of the Shofar of Rosh Hashanah.

We Are All Insiders

In order for these jolting forces to work, there is one proviso. We cannot imagine that we are Acher, an "another", an outsider.

The apostate Elisha ben Avuya, cited earlier, could not return because he heard the heavenly voice declare, specifically, that everyone can return except for Acher. It did not say "except Elisha ben Avuyah, which was his proper name. He heard the voice exclaim Acher, the "other one."

When a Jew, no matter how far he or she has strayed and desensitized himself or herself, recognizes that he or she is always an insider, he or she can certainly return.

Standing on the Bridge

As we stand on the bridge between two years, we are reminded that we are now also situated on the bridge between the close to 2,000 year exile and the final Redemption through Moshiach. When we view all the negative things around us, we should exploit their power to awaken us to the reality of our situation. The sound of the Shofar that heralds the Messianic Age has already been sounded. This Rosh Hashanah, it is our role to hear and heed the call of the Shofar, not only as an echo of the past, but also as the sound of the future Redemption.

And may we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year, a year of visible good, including the ultimate good and blessing of the total revelation of Moshiach and the imminent final Redemption.

ESSAY TWO

WHERE'S MY HEAD?

Many of life's challenges relate to the influence of others.

Without realizing it, we follow blindly the fads that have been established by people we do not know or respect.

The message of Rosh Hashanah-The *Head* of the Year is that we should truly be heads and not tails.

We must use discernment as to when we should follow and when we should lead.

ESSAY TWO

WHERE'S MY HEAD?

A Fish Head?

Rosh Hashanah is not just the beginning of the New Year, it is also and primarily the "head" of the year. A head is more than just the highest part of our anatomy; it is also that part of us that houses our intellect and the nerve center of our entire body.

Similarly, Rosh Hashanah is the brain and nerve center of the entire year. It is the day that will determine the quality of our life—both physical and spiritual—throughout the year.

But there is also another lesson that we can derive from the fact that Rosh Hashanah is the "Head" of the year that relates to the way we should view our own heads. Indeed, to highlight the importance of the "head" metaphor of Rosh Hashanah, it is customary to eat the head of a lamb or of a fish on Rosh Hashanah, or, at least to have it on our table, as our way of expressing our desire to "be a head and not a tail."

Translating this custom in terms that are relevant to the average person, the following insight can be offered:

Peer Pressure

Many of the challenges in life that we are confronted with relate to the way we are influenced by the actions of others. Without realizing it, we follow blindly the fads that have been established by others; mostly people we do not know or respect. But once a fad becomes entrenched in society, even the most independent minded people follow blindly.

Even many non-conforming rebels of the sixties and seventies joined communities where they would wear the same ripped jeans etc., i.e. total conformity with all the others of their group.

The message of Rosh Hashanah is that we should truly be heads and not tails. This does not mean that we cannot follow the customs of our community, but we must use discernment as to when we should follow and when we should lead.

The Head of All Knowledge, Behavior and Society

To help us in this evaluation, we must refer once again to the head metaphor. Just as there is a head of a body and

the head of a year, there is also a head of ideas, values and behaviors.

Torah is the head of all wisdom. The Divine commandments (Mitzvot) are the heads of all behaviors. Goodness and kindness are the heads of all virtues. Righteous people are the true heads of society. And, of course, G-d is the Head of all existence.

When we have to make choices about matters pertaining to our "heads," G-d, Torah etc., we have to see to it that we become the heads and guides of others. When dealing with mundane matters—things that are morally and spiritually neutral—then it does not matter whether we follow the crowd or we become pace setters.

This then is the lesson of Rosh Hashanah-The Head of the Year. Be a head, a leader in matters of holiness, in all matters that involve the head.

Waste is a Terrible Thing to Mind

And the follow up lesson from the designation of this day as the Head of the Year is that we must determine where our head is. In what pursuits to we invest our most important faculty—the mind? If a mind is a terrible thing to waste, then to use our minds for things that ought to be wasted is even more terrible. Is our mind obsessed with material pursuits?

Is our mind preoccupied with selfish interests? Is our mind involved with petty squabbles and trivial pursuits? Or is our mind focused on growing spiritually? Does our mind dwell on how we can be selflessly devoted to our families and others? Do we concentrate our minds on how we can better serve G-d, by studying Torah and observing the Mitzvot?

On Rosh Hashanah we ask ourselves: Where is my head? And am I a head or a tail?

Historically speaking, we are living at the tail end of exile, on the very heels of the Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, who will be our head. An important part of the Rosh Hashanah emphasis on the head is that we plead with G-d to turn our tail situation into a head situation; that He bring an end to the exile and usher in an age when the entire world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d (Head).

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year; a year when we will all be heads and not tails!

ESSAY THREE

GIVING THE YEAR A HEAD

Rosh Hashanah is when we coronate G-d as our King. Without our involvement on Rosh Hashanah to proclaim Him as our King the world will not be the same.

G-d will continue to keep the world going, but His "head and heart" will not be in it.

Rosh Hashanah gives the entire cosmos a head; a G-dly sense of satisfaction and delight.

G-d develops a meaningful relationship with us and we with Him. He is our King and not our dictator.

ESSAY THREE

GIVING THE YEAR A HEAD

Beginning and Head of the Year

Rosh Hashanah is not just the beginning of the year; it is the "Head" of the year. And there is a big difference between the two terms. A baby **begins** its life with a cry; but does not get a head until a later stage in life. Beginnings are not always heads.

Indeed, although it is the Head of the Year, Rosh Hashanah, occurs in what the Torah states is "the first of the *seventh* month." It is clearly not the beginning of the year!

In what way is Rosh Hashanah likened to a head?

Without a head a person has no life and identity. The head contains the brain as well as the most delicate senses of sight, hearing, smell and taste. A human being's possession of a head means that he or she is a sentient and purposeful being one that can make a difference.

Applying the head metaphor to a year, Rosh Hashanah is the day that gives meaning and purpose to all the days of

the year. Without a proper Rosh Hashanah the rest of the year can become a vacuous and purposeless year.

What gives Rosh Hashanah its status as the Head of the Year? The answer is that our actions will determine to what extent G-d will indeed be our Head. Rosh Hashanah is when we coronate G-d as our King. Without our involvement on Rosh Hashanah to proclaim Him as our King the world will not be the same.

To be sure, G-d will continue to keep the world going, but His "head and heart" will not be in it. Rosh Hashanah gives the entire cosmos a head; a G-dly sense of satisfaction and delight. G-d develops a meaningful relationship with us and we with Him. He is our King and not our dictator.

Rosh Hashanah Symbolism

The above may shed some light on the emphasis on *simanim*—eating symbolic foods during Rosh Hashanah. We eat pomegranates because they have a multitude of seeds. It represents our wish for our merits to increase. We eat the head of a lamb or fish to suggest we shall be a head. We eat sweet foods so that we will be blessed with a sweet year. And we even eat foods which have names in various languages with positive connotations. Why is this custom reserved for Rosh Hashanah? And what value does a symbolic act really have?

The answer is that that is precisely what Rosh Hashanah is about; finding meaning in everything we do. Even the choice of food should reflect a positive Rosh Hashanah theme. On Rosh Hashanah we underscore the notion that nothing in our lives is trivial; everything can and must be infused with meaning. Absent that emphasis much of our life can be said to be without a head.

Seeing the Light

The ultimate expression of a year having a head is when we acquire a level of understanding of reality; with absolute clarity as to who we are, why we were created and our ultimate destiny. This is why Rosh Hashanah is observed on the day that Adam was created and not six days earlier when G-d first brought the universe into existence. Only the creation of a human being can validate the creation. Only the human being can know his or her purpose and utilize all of the resources of the world towards the fulfillment of that purpose.

Our Sages tell us that on the day that Adam was created the primordial light that was created on day one of creation (not to be confused with sun light) served him for 36 hours and it enabled him to see from one end of the world to the other. This could be interpreted to mean that Adam had a clear vision as to what his purpose was in this

world and how he could affect the entire cosmos with his positive actions

Each one of us acquires some of that clarity on Rosh Hashanah.

Shofar Reality

On Rosh Hashanah we sound the shofar, according to Maimonides, as a wake-up call to get us out of our reverie and to "smell the coffee." It gets us to become aware of the fact that we were created by G-d with a Divine purpose.

On Rosh Hashanah we sound the shofar, Rav Sa'adia Gaon writes, as our way of coronating the King. This is meant to get us to reflect on our purpose to serve G-d by first acknowledging that He is our King, and to whom we pay exclusive allegiance.

On Rosh Hashanah we sound the shofar to remind us of the shofar that was sounded at Mount Sinai when G-d gave us the Torah. We ponder how G-d gave us a Master Plan, i.e., the Torah, which is the guide by which we fulfill our purpose.

On Rosh Hashanah we sound the shofar to remind us of the "Great Shofar" that will herald that glorious age when the world will become a perfected world, as a result of our cumulative actions throughout history. We focus on how G-d's plan will ultimately be realized and the entire world

will become a dwelling place for Him. This will happen in the imminent Messianic Age.

On Rosh Hashanah we sound the Shofar, according to the Ba'al Shem Tov, as a way of recognizing our soul's primal cry; that it wants to get close to our Father even as we may have strayed throughout the year and have lost our ability to communicate with Him verbally.

In short, on Rosh Hashanah, specifically through the sounding of the Shofar, we come face to face with life's most existential issues. The shofar clears up all the cob-webs and disperses all the dark clouds from our consciousness. We leave Rosh Hashanah with a clear head.

3 x 3 = Empowerment

Each year possesses features that distinguish it from other years.

For example, this year [the year 5774 when this essay was originally written] Rosh Hashanah occured on a Thursday and Friday. In effect, we have three consecutive days of holiness. The Talmud states that when something is repeated three times it establishes a *chazakah* a pattern that renders that phenomenon a permanent one. We thus usher in this year with a strengthened experience of holiness. Indeed, this pattern of three consecutive Holy days, repeats itself again with the Festival of Sukkos and

the festival of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. We now have a pattern of three repeated three times!

All of this points to an unusual measure of empowerment to transform our prayers and resolutions into reality. This year, with G-d's help, will indeed be a powerful spiritual year that will enhance our ability to see things clearly!

A Year of Acronyms

However, this pattern has occurred many times in the past. What is unique about this year is that it is the first (and last) time we have the year 5774. In Hebrew the year will be ה'תשע"ד

What is the significance of this number?

In past years the Rebbe demonstrated how each year was an acronym for a Moshiach and Redemption related theme. What can be said about this year in that regard?

[Although the following refers specifically to a year of the past, the Rebbe has taught us that any spiritual force that enters the world at a specific time endures forever. Therefore, the spiritual dynamics of the year 5774 continues to this day and beyond. The new year ads on new dimensions of spirituality on top of the pre-existing ones.]

There are four acronyms that come to mind.

The first is: "הי' תהא שנת דעת עליון-This shall be a year of Higher Level Knowledge."

The second is: "הי' תהא שנת דרור עולם-This shall be a year of Eternal Freedom."

The third is: "הי' תהא שנת דירת עצמות-This shall be a year of a Dwelling Place for G-d's Essence."

The fourth is: "הי' תהא שנת דיצה עולמית -This shall be a year of Eternal joy."

All four of these acronyms point to the ultimate understanding as to what is our purpose and what is our focus on Rosh Hashanah.

This year [the year of the republishing of this essay] is the year 5776. In Hebrew it forms the word תשועה which means salvation. The advantage of this over previous years is that we don't have to resort to an acronym to underscore the Messianic potential and energy of this year; it is explicit in the very number!

The date for republishing this essay has been extended into the year 5777, which is numerically equivalent to the word Teshuah/תשועה plus one.

The significance of the "plus one" is that we put additional focus on incorporating the idea of oneness into every aspect of the anticipated salvation. Rather than salvation be limited to physical salvation we insert the number one to

underscore that everything we do and the salvation we will experience will revolve around the number one.

This is similar to the idea (mentioned frequently in these essays) that the difference between the Hebrew words for exile (Golah) and Redemption (Geulah) is the letter/number aleph-one. By inserting the "one" into exile it transforms it into Geulah. This notion we may suggest is underscored in this year of 5777 in particular.

A Year of Moshiach and Redemption

Concerning the Messianic Age the prophet declares: "And the entire earth will be covered with the **knowledge** of G-d..."

What will distinguish the knowledge of G-d we have now from the knowledge we will have in the future? Not only will the knowledge extend to the entire world, but it will be a higher form of knowledge.

Chassidic thought distinguishes between the way we perceive G-d vis-à-vis our own existence and the way G-d views Himself vis-à-vis our existence. We view our own existence as reality and G-d's existence as abstract, elusive and utterly beyond us. From G-d's perspective, He is the only reality and we are non-entities. Our existence is no more and no less than an extension of G-d's creative powers. The two approaches to reality are referred to in Kabbalah and Chassidus as "*Da'as Tachton*-Lower Level

Knowledge" and "*Da'as Elyon*-Higher Level Knowledge" respectively.

In the Messianic Age, *Da'as Elyon*-the Higher Level reality will become the norm. The entire world will rise to the highest levels of knowledge and that knowledge will be fully integrated into our physical existence. We will not cease being human. In our human state we will acquire that presently elusive knowledge.

We anticipate that this year will finally be the year when the entire world will truly acquire a head in the most sophisticated and sublime level of head-Higher Level Knowledge.

We also hope, pray and anticipate that this year will be a year of eternal freedom. Unlike earlier Redemptions when there was a potential for a reversal, this Redemption will be final and eternal.

In the Messianic Age, the entire world will realize its G-d given purpose and it will become a dwelling for G-d's very Essence. Whereas in the past, the most that could be expected was for G-d's light and external manifestations to dwell in our midst, the Messianic Age will feature a G-dly revolution. G-d's very Essence will be fully revealed in our physical world.

And finally, the Messianic Age will bring eternal joy. There is no greater joy than knowing that one's life has meaning and that we have realized the purpose of our creation.

May we see all of this unfold before our eyes and may we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year!

ESSAY FOUR

THE THREE QUESTIONS

Joy and Introspection are both imperatives.

Torah reveals the secret how they can coexist.

ESSAY FOUR

THE THREE QUESTIONS

The Three Sounds

The central observance of Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the shofar. There are three distinct sounds that must be made: A *Tekiah*-a long blast, *Shevarim*, three broken short blasts, and *Teruah*, a series of rapid, staccato sounds. These two "broken sounds" are collectively referred to in the Torah as Teruah. Every Teruah sound must be prefaced by a Tekiah sound and also must be followed by a Tekiah sound. Many explanations have been advanced for this sequence.

One symbolic explanation is that the Tekiah is a sound of joy. As we stand in judgment before G-d, we are confident in His compassion and He will certainly heed our prayers. There is great joy in the knowledge that we will win our case.

The broken sounds of the Teruah express our broken heart and remorse for all the negative things of the past year for which we ask forgiveness. This is followed by another

Tekiah, to indicate that we know that G-d will forgive us and give us a good and sweet year.

Strange Talmudic Questions

This introductory description of the Tekiah and Teruah sounds will help shed some light on an enigmatic series of questions and answers in the Talmud about the Shofar:

The Talmud asks:

> "Why do we sound the Tekiah (the long blast) of the shofar?"

To which the Talmud responds,

> "Why? Because it's says so in the Torah!"

The Talmud continues with a second question: "

> Why do we sound the Teruah (the broken sound)?"

Again the Talmud's incredulous response,

> "Why? Because it's says so in the Torah!"

The Talmud finally follows these two questions with a third more understandable question:

> "Why do we sound the Tekiah and the Teruah when we sit and then again when we stand?"

This is a reference to the two series of Shofar blowing. Before the Musaf prayer we sound the Shofar, at which

time it is permissible to sit. These are known as the "Sitting sounds of shofar." We then repeat the sequence of shofar blowing during the Musaf service, at which time one is required to stand. Hence these blasts are known as the "standing sounds of shofar." And here the Talmud asks why we must repeat all of the blasts?

The answer:

"To confound the satan."

Satan is an angel G-d created and serves as the obstacle and challenge to us. When the Satan sees how conscientious we are—that we are not content with a one time, perhaps, perfunctory sounding of the Shofar, but we repeat it again—it demonstrates that we have the power to overcome any obstacle.

However, what needs clarification in this Talmudic passage is what did the Talmud have in mind when it asked why we sound the Tekiah and the Teruah? Didn't the Talmudic sages know that they are commanded in the Torah? And if they wanted to know the reason **why** the Torah commanded us to make these sounds, no answer is furnished in that passage. All it says is that it is so written in the Torah—a fact that we knew from the outset!

We can gain some insight into the Talmud's questions with the introduction above: i.e., the Tekiah is an expression of joy and confidence, whereas the Teruah indicates a broken

heart and heartfelt remorse for one's past iniquity. We can now proceed to understand the underlying premise of the Talmud's questions.

How Can we be so Confident and Happy?

The first question is why do we sound the Tekiah?

The Tekiah, as was noted, is a long triumphant blast indicating that we are celebrating our victory. Incredible! We have barely begun the Rosh Hashanah service yet we are so confident that we will prevail!

Thus the Talmud's question as to why we sound the Tekiah might actually be a question as to **how** can we be so confident when our lives are being judged and our fate hangs in the balance?

Moreover, as we reflect on the state of the world we ask, how can we be so happy in a world that is so shattered and fragmented? How can a Jew express any feeling of joy considering the amount of pain and anguish that exists in our lives and in the lives of so many others all over the world?

Would this be any other time of the year, one can and must compartmentalize one's feelings. There is a time to rejoice and a time to empathize with the pain of others. But on Rosh Hashanah, the anniversary of creation of all

humanity, the entire world's concerns are foremost on our minds. How can we in good conscience be joyous?

Torah Reality

To which the Talmud replies: "It says so in the Torah!"

Torah is not only a collection of laws and guidance for us. It is Divine wisdom. It represents the ultimate and true reality from which all other reality emerges. The Torah is the blueprint of the world. If it is not in the blueprint it cannot be real. And conversely, if it is in the Torah then it **is** real, true and can eminently achievable!

If the Torah says, unequivocally, that we can sound the triumphant, confident, joyous sound of the Tekiah on Rosh Hashanah, it is true regardless of our own perceptions to the contrary.

Reminder of G-d's Promise

The triumphant sound of the Shofar, furthermore, reminds us of G-d's promise to bring Moshiach and usher in an age of true peace and goodness. That is reality because it is the reality established by the Torah regardless of our own perceptions of reality. The Torah declares that as we enter into the Day of Judgment we should come with confidence and joy that we will prevail because, in the end we will.

The sound of the Shofar is both a reminder of the sound of the Shofar that preceded the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and the sound of the Shofar that will herald the arrival of Moshiach and the final Redemption.

How Can we Reconcile Joy with a Shattered Heart?

The Talmud then questions the reason why we sound the Teruah, the broken sound which expresses the opposite emotion of a broken heart. The sound of Teruah has been compared by our sages to the moaning and wailing sounds of a person who is distraught about their situation.

Why then do we sound this sound of Teruah which seems to contradict the first sound of Tekiah that bespeaks joy? How can we do both; sound the joyous sound of the Tekiah and follow it with the melancholy sound of the Teruah? How can one combine these two opposite feelings?

Furthermore, how can we afford to allow ourselves to dwell on the negative and allow us to fall apart emotionally? Won't these thoughts lead us to depression and other destructive feelings?

Torah Synthesis

Again the Talmud answers. "It says so in the Torah!"

The Torah is the ultimate instrument of empowerment. The Torah is likened to both fire and water because it is a

composite of both extremes. Torah therefore gives us the ability and the strength to achieve that balance and synthesis. On the one hand, Torah is refreshing and life sustaining as water. On the other hand, Torah can also be demanding and will burn our inside negativity.

Without Torah, joy can often border on levity and frivolity that can distract a person from the serious matters in life. Conversely, a person who is heartbroken can descend into depression that can destroy the person. When our joy and broken heartedness is derived from and empowered by the Torah, they are safe and productive emotions and therefore capable of coexisting. The joy does not take us away from reality and the broken heart does not take away our enthusiasm and joy.

Thus, the Teruah sound is followed by another Tekiah, to underscore that we cannot remain in a Teruah state. The need for serious self-evaluation and introspection is not intended to be permanent. It is a temporary state of mind necessary for self-cleansing; and it must be "sandwiched" in between two Tekiah-joyous blasts.

A Jew must begin with joy and confidence and conclude with joy and confidence.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a year of goodness, sweetness and joy.

ESSAY FIVE

A TRULY NEW YEAR!

When the two days of Rosh Hashanah are followed by Shabbos—three consecutive days of holiness—it represents a qualitatively higher form of holiness.

An event that recurs three times establishes a *chazakah* (literally: a strong fact), an established and entrenched reality.

And just as the head controls the entire body, so too, Rosh Hashanah, which means Head of the Year, defines the nature of the entire year; a year of magnified holiness.

ESSAY FIVE

A TRULY *NEW* YEAR!

New Energy

Every Rosh Hashanah brings new energy and new hope for the future. The Chassidic classic Tanya explains that every Rosh Hashanah G-d introduces a new, unprecedented surge of Divine energy to the world.

This is true each and every year. But there are certain years where the characteristics of the year accentuate the unique quality of that particular year. This year 5768 features a convergence of significant factors.

It should be noted that the Rebbe stated that even when we discuss the uniqueness of a certain year, such as the year 5768, does not stop at this year but its influence continues on into the future. The difference only lies in the focus, whereas this year the focus is on its Shabbos dynamic, other years may have a different focus.

Patterns of Three

First, the two days of Rosh Hashanah are followed by *Shabbos*. Whenever there are three consecutive days of holiness it represents a qualitatively higher form of holiness. In Jewish law, an event that recurs three times establishes a *chazakah* (literally: a strong fact), an established and entrenched reality.

And just as the head controls the entire body, so too, Rosh Hashanah, which means Head of the Year, defines the nature of the entire year.

Second, this three-consecutive-days-of-holiness pattern repeats itself in this month of Tishrei another two times: at the beginning and the end of the Sukkot-Sinchat Torah Holiday continuum. This attests to an exponentially stronger infusion of holiness this coming year.

Additional Unique Features

Third, this year is a Sabbatical year. From the time Joshua conquered the Land of Israel the Torah commanded us to desist from agricultural work every seven years. The spirit of this law that applies in the Diaspora and in non-agricultural societies is that every seven years we must focus more on the spiritual aspects of life. A Sabbatical year is also a year of rest and peace.

Fourth, this year is also a Jewish leap year. This means that we will have thirteen months instead of the standard twelve. In Hebrew, this year is referred to as a "*shanah m'uberes*," or "a pregnant year." It is a year that is pregnant with new energy and spiritual potential.

Fifth, the number of this year is 5768. The number 68 is equivalent to the word "*chaim*" which means life. While every Rosh Hashanah is punctuated by our requests for life, this year of "chaim" will afford us an even greater opportunity to experience life to the fullest.

One of the features of the Messianic Age is that it will usher in an age when life will be lived to the fullest, in both the physical as well as the spiritual sense.

As we usher in the "Head-Rosh" of the three-days-of-holiness-Sabbatical-Leap-year-of-life, may we all be inscribed and sealed for a holy, good, sweet, peaceful, pregnant with life, healthy and happy New Year. And above all may it be a year of the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach!

ESSAY SIX

THE UNSHOFAR

The Shofar works primarily because it jolts us out of our reverie.

There are certain times, however, when we need to be awakened not by the jolting sound of a Shofar, but by the loving caress of a day that is permeated with delight, joy, peace, rest and tranquility, the qualities of *Shabbos*.

ESSAY SIX

THE UNSHOFAR

No Shofar

Some years, the first day of Rosh Hashanah coincides with *Shabbos*. One of the consequences of this combination is that we do not sound the Shofar on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. The reason given by the Talmud is puzzling. The Talmud explains that there is a concern that one might inadvertently violate the *Shabbos* restrictions in the interest of learning how to blow the Shofar.

Commentators find this explanation difficult to comprehend. Why would the rabbis deprive all of the Jewish people of the opportunity to fulfill this profoundly inspirational and cosmically influential mitzvah of sounding the shofar because of a remote possibility that someone might inadvertently violate the *Shabbos* rules?

No Need for Shofar

In Chassidic literature, the answer provided is that in reality, when Rosh Hashanah coincides with *Shabbos*, there

is no need to sound the Shofar because the spiritual effect of Shofar sounding is replicated by the *Shabbos*. In the layman's language, the Shofar is intended to get G-d to express His pleasure with our world, and similarly, *Shabbos* is the day of delight, when G-d expresses His satisfaction with the world.

Every Detail Counts

Another solution to this problem could be offered that is based on the singular significance of Rosh Hashanah.

On Rosh Hashanah, every detail counts more than any other time of the year. Rosh Hashanah, is not just the beginning of the year, it is the "head" of the year; its brain and nerve center. A scratch on the hand may be irritating; a scratch on the brain can affect the entire body's well-being; it can even be fatal.

Similarly, the Talmudic Sages' concern that Shofar sounding might lead to an infraction of the *Shabbos* laws, was taken more seriously on Rosh Hashanah than any other time, because of the far-reaching effects of any imbalance in our lives at that auspicious time.

[The problem with this solution, however, is the Talmud applies this reasoning to explain why the rabbis banned shaking the Lulav when Sukkos coincides with *Shabbos*, as well as the reading of the Megillah on Purim when it

coincides with *Shabbos*. One must seek a separate explanation for these other occasions when the remote concern of a *Shabbos* infraction overrides the Mitzvah of the day.]

Learning Sensitivity

Another simple moralistic approach can also be advanced to answer the question as to why a remote fear that the *Shabbos* will be violated is able to cancel the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

There are Biblical commandments that tell us how to act in relation to animals, plants and even inanimate objects. For example, we are not to walk with wide strides up to the altar in the Holy Temple because it is immodest and disrespectful to the stones! Rashi explains that this is to teach us sensitivity to other people. If we condition ourselves to be modest in relation to an inanimate object, we will certainly become sensitive in the presence of other people.

Similarly, the ban against Shofar sounding when it coincides with *Shabbos* can be understood as a way to sensitize us to the concerns of others when they conflict with our own. When we try to do a Mitzvah, which is our way of growing spiritually, we must always be mindful of how it may impact other Mitzvot. An illustration of this

conflict is the scenario of one who pushes through a crowd of people to get closer to a Torah scroll so it can be kissed. This individual, in the pursuit of a Mitzvah, shows total disregard for the people he is pushing and perhaps harming. It is an example of how the urge to do one Mitzvah that expresses love and affection was at the expense of another Mitzvah to show love and affection to other people.

Similarly here the message of not sounding the shofar is: While we are trying to inspire ourselves to Teshuvah (repentance and returning to G-d), and while we are asking G-d to be our King, we should not forget to respect the demands of the weekly *Shabbos*. Don't let (what appears to be) the small details of Judaism get swept under the rug because we are doing something that we think is far more important and majestic.

The simple message in this is when you do one good thing don't let it be at the expense of another good thing.

Rosh Hashanah is a time for resolutions. However, before we make a resolution, let's say, to stay up another hour to study Torah, make sure that it doesn't translate into waking up an hour or more later. We should add to our commitments not subtract from them in the guise of adding, any time of the year, particularly on Rosh Hashanah.

Awakened by a Caress

Another approach to this issue as to why we do not blow shofar when Rosh Hashanah occurs on a *Shabbos* is based on the different approaches of Shofar and *Shabbos*. The Shofar works primarily, Maimonides explains in his code of law, because it jolts us out of our reverie. The Shofar, in most years, and on the second day of Rosh Hashanah this year, is a necessary instrument to shake us up.

There are certain times, however, when we need to be awakened not by the jolting sound of a Shofar, but by the loving caress of a day that is permeated with delight, joy, peace, rest and tranquility, the qualities of *Shabbos*.

Two Scenarios

There are two scenarios for the coming of Moshiach as well. Moshiach's arrival is to be heralded by the sound of a Great Shofar. However, this can occur in two opposite ways, as well as in scenarios that combine the two. Moshiach's arrival can be preceded by cataclysmic events that jolt us into realizing that a New Age is upon us, and that we should shape up and get ready for a world that will be permeated with G-dly light.

A completely opposite scenario can be for the Moshiach to come in an atmosphere of peace, serenity and love. The more we prepare ourselves now, refining our character and

revealing the G-dly energy within us, the less we need to be jolted.

Let us hope and pray that the imminent coming of Moshiach and the ushering in of the Messianic Age should follow the peaceful-*Shabbos* scenario, particularly this year when Rosh Hashanah coincides with the *Shabbos*.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year, a *Shabbos* year of peace and complete Redemption.

ESSAY SEVEN

THE YEAR OF SALVATION, DELIGHT AND MOSHIACH

The Ba'al Shem Tov would frequently encourage us to break through the internal barriers that prevent us from expressing all of our latent potential, and to even go beyond our capabilities in doing good in all matters that involve our relationship with G-d and our relationship with others.

ESSAY SEVEN

THE YEAR OF SALVATION, DELIGHT AND MOSHIACH

A Special Year

This year Rosh Hashanah will usher in the year 5770. Much has been written about the significance of this year, which is pregnant with multitude layers of meaning.

When referring to the year we usually drop the millennia. So this year is known in Hebrew as the year: *tesha* which comprises the Hebrew letters: *tav, shin, ayin*, which adds up to the number 770, inasmuch as Hebrew letters also serve as numbers.

The word *tesha* comes from the root that means salvation. In the Jewish context, salvation means for the Jewish people and indeed the entire world to be saved from all forms of adversity. In our most important daily prayer—the *Shemoneh Esrei*—we beseech G-d "For Your salvation we hope every day," a reference to the salvation that will occur in the Messianic Age.

The Number Nine

The word *tesha* is also the Hebrew word for the number nine. The number nine has significance on multiple levels.

First, it is the highest number. The number ten, is actually a repetition of the sequence of numbers that go from one through nine. That the name of this year is nine suggests that this year has the potential to become the year of highest achievement. But high achievement in and of itself is not sufficient if it doesn't endure.

And here is where we have a second connotation of the number nine:

According to the Midrash, nine is the number of consistency. No matter what you do to the number nine—multiply it by any other number—you will always get the number nine. To illustrate: Nine multiplied by two equals 18. One plus eight is nine. Another example: 9 multiplied by 613 is 5517. If you add up these numbers you will get nine in the end (5+5+1+7=18. 1+8=9). This suggests that the highest good that we will receive will be a good that does not dissipate.

T'hei Shnas Oneg-May it be a Year of Delight

But, even the highest and most consistent good can come with a price. It can be associated with pain and suffering.

To dispel the notion that the good that we will experience will come with a heavy price tag, there is yet another hint associated with the three letters that comprise this year: *Tav, shin, Ayin*:

These letters form an acronym for the phrase: "*T'hei shnas oneg*-It will be a year of **delight**." Pain and suffering are not absolutes. The only absolute is G-d and His promise that a time will come that all sorrow and negativity will be erased. This year is certainly a good time for that to happen!

Indeed, the message of delight for this year is compounded because the first day of Rosh Hashanah occurs on a *Shabbos*, the day of delight. So powerful is the influence of the *Shabbos* and its message of peace, rest and delight, that we do not blow the shofar on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. One of the reasons for this is that the power of delight engendered by the Sabbath is capable of achieving the same objective of the shofar, which is designed to make the Divine power of delight enter and engulf the world.

All this implies that the ultimate and consistent good we will experience will be one that will be punctuated with delight. According to the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidut, there is no more potent energy than delight that derives from the essence of the soul.

770

But even delight can be restricted to one place. This year the message of delight will spread to the entire world inasmuch as the number of this year, 770—a number made famous because it is the address of the Rebbe's synagogue and the center of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement—is the numerical value of the word "*parazta*"—which occurs in the Biblical blessing G-d gave the Patriarch Jacob: "and you shall spread forth from the west and the east, the north and the south."

Thus the message of delight that this new year represents will spread forth to all parts of the world in the literal sense of the word, as well as the figurative sense of the word. The delight we will experience will—as the word break-forth connotes—break through all the external and internal barriers that prevent this G-dly delight from extending to all parts of the macro world as well as the micro world.

But delight, even as it spreads to the far reaches of the world can be a limited form of delight. Once again the term "*paratzta"*dispenses with that notion because it connotes that the delight has no boundaries; nothing to confine or limit it.

And, finally, the words, "Beis Moshiach-the House of Moshiach" also adds up to the number 770. This implies that this year will be one in which we transform our lives,

homes and the entire world to be one huge Home for Moshiach."—a world that is hospitable to the ideal of G-d and His teachings.

In summation: May this year—as its name implies—be a year of salvation, uninterrupted, unrestricted and unlimited delight. A year of Moshiach!

Our Role

So far we've discussed what G-d's role will be in the shaping of this year. What is our role?

We might suggest that our role in the above is to follow the Rebbe's direction and persistent plea that we all should add to all the good that we already do and—as the Rebbe (who is the **ninth** generation of leadership from the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement) would frequently encourage us—to break through the internal barriers that prevent us from expressing all of our latent potential, and to even go beyond our capabilities in doing good in all matters that involve our relationship with G-d and our relationship with others.

May all of you—amidst all of Israel—be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year in all matters material and spiritual. And may we all greet Moshiach will delight and joy.

ESSAY EIGHT
DAY OF JUDGMENT

Rosh Hashanah is more than a solemn day of judgment.

It is the day which determines not only the life of nature for the New Year, but the very nature of life as well.

All of this depends on our acceptance of, and enthusiasm for, G-d as our King, on Rosh Hashanah.

ESSAY EIGHT

DAY OF JUDGMENT

An even More Powerful Theme?

The focus of Rosh Hashanah is judgment. We stand before G-d and ask Him to grant us a good year. When the cantor recites the famous U'nesaneh Tokef prayer in which speaks of G-d as the One who decides who will live and who will not, everyone implores G-d to judge us favorably. It is hard not to shed a tear when we plead for our very lives.

And yet, upon closer reflection, there is a much more powerful theme inherent in the day of Rosh Hashanah and in its liturgy.

Rosh Hashanah is the day when we proclaim G-d as our King. Indeed, we implore Him to accept our pleas that He should reign over the entire world.

Rosh Hashanah's most important activity is the sounding of the Shofar. Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon (10th century) enumerated ten reasons for this Mitzvah; the first of which is that the

Shofar represents the trumpets which accompany the coronation of the King.

The Difference between a King and a Dictator

The obvious question is why G-d has to be beseeched to become our King. Is not G-d the Creator of the Universe? Is He not our King whether we recognize and appreciate it or not? Why, then is there a need to ask Him to become something that He is already ?

Chassidic thought addresses this question by referring to the difference between the two Hebrew words for a monarch: *melech* and *moshel*, a king and a dictator. The latter does not consult with his subjects whether they want him to govern, while the former rules by popular consent. He must be asked to govern. The people who will become his subjects must awaken within him the desire to be their leader.

Another difference between the dictator and the king is that the king derives immense pleasure and satisfaction at having been asked to be their leader. He puts his whole heart and soul into his subjects. The dictator, by contrast, does not invest his delight, his soul, mind and heart in his people.

Were we to not show up on Rosh Hashanah, the world would continue to exist. G-d "committed" Himself to keep

the world going, whether or not we invite Him into our lives. But then, G-d would be a moshel. He would not be involved in our lives. His presence in this world would be a "forced" one. His "heart" would not be in it. The world would go on, to be sure, but in a lifeless and listless way. No enthusiasm, no excitement.

On Rosh Hashanah, when we proclaim to G-d "Reign over the entire world in Your glory," or when we sound the shofar we are expressing our most profound feelings of acceptance of G-d's rule/role in our lives. And then G-d reciprocates. He proceeds to be our King, not because He has to – because of His commitment to keep the world going – but because He really wants to. The world then feels G-d's excitement with His creation, and we, in turn, feel excitement with our own lives.

Rosh Hashanah is thus more than a solemn day of judgment, who will live etc. It is the day which determines not only the life of nature for the new year, but the very nature of life as well. And all of this depends on our acceptance of and enthusiasm for G-d as our King, on Rosh Hashanah.

The Real Request

Although G-d has accepted the role of King for close to 6,000 years, His role as King cannot be fully implemented until the Final Redemption. As long as we are in Galus-exile with all of its obstructive force, G-d Kingship is not allowed to manifest itself in its full glory and majesty.

Thus, when we plead to G-d to "Reign on the entire world in all Your Glory," we are not referring to the way He has reigned until now. Rather it is our plea that He bring us the Final Redemption when He will reign in all His glory!

ESSAY NINE

THE HEAD

Rosh Hashanah is more than just a day designated for certain rituals and services.

The day itself has a soul and life of its own. And depending on how we show respect for the awesomeness of the day, we will be blessed with a good and productive year.

ESSAY NINE

THE HEAD

Why the Head?

Rosh Hashanah is often translated as the Jewish New Year. In fact, the word Rosh Hashanah means, "The Head of the Year ".

The question has been raised: Why do we refer to the beginning of a new year as the "Rosh/head" of the year, rather than the "beginning" of the year-"*Techilas* Hashanah"?

Chassidic thought demonstrates that, in fact, the relationship of Rosh Hashanah to the rest of the year parallels the relationship of the head and the rest of the body.

The head, or to be more precise, the brain, is more than just one of the many components of the human organism. The brain we all know is the most vital organ. Its physical location above the rest of the body is a reflection of its [pr-eminent position vis-a-vis all other limbs.

The head is also the organ which comprises the energy and vitality of all the body's parts. And thirdly, the brain is the organ whose energy is extended to and is present throughout the body.

If we could imagine the new year as an organic entity with all sorts of limbs and organs we call days, weeks and months, the day of Rosh Hashanah would be the year's very head or brain. And its relationship to the rest of the year, likewise manifests itself in three ways .

Pre-eminent Day

First of all, Rosh Hashanah is the most pre-eminent day of the year. It is "head and shoulders" above all other days of the year .

Most people would have placed Yom Kippur in this slot, however, Yom Kippur's importance is based on it being the culmination of the process begun on Rosh Hashanah. Indeed, in the Biblical book of Yechezkal, the term Rosh Hashanah is used to describe Yom Kippur.

Life Force of Entire Year

But, Rosh Hashanah is not only the most important day of the year, it actually contains the life-force of all the other days of the year.

And, finally, when time progresses and as we proceed through the days of the year, the days are infused with life and vitality from the day of Rosh Hashanah.

How to Relate to Rosh Hashanah

What relevance does all of the above have to us?

When Rosh Hashanah arrives, we must remember that it is more than just a day designated for certain rituals and services. The day itself has a soul and life of its own. And depending on how we show respect for the awesomeness of the day, we will be blessed with a good and productive year .

To use the brain analogy: When a person is careful not to injure the brain it will be able to execute its function as the life force of the body. But, injuring the brain is not the only impediment to a healthy person. One must not allow the brain to atrophy. One must use the brain.

Likewise, on Rosh Hashanah, we must not only avoid negative experiences which could injure the brain. In addition, we must realize that inaction on Rosh Hashanah can also be injurious and will prevent the brain from performing its function as a life sustaining organ.

Moshiach the Rosh of Humanity

Just as there is A Rosh-Head in time, there is also a Rosh in terms of souls.

In general all of the great leaders of the past, from Moses onward, were the Rosh of the entire Jewish nation, and by extension the entire world.

However, of all the leaders, Moshiach stands out as the head because it is he who will bring the world to its final stage.

And as a brain, Moshiach will succeed unprecedentedly in uniting all of the Jewish people. All Jews will realize that they are part of one body and will, in unison serve G-d in the unifying atmosphere of Jerusalem and the Third Bais Hamikdash; the Rosh-head of the entire world.

Rosh Hashanah is therefore the most opportune time for us to connect to Moshiach and the Bais Hamikdash.

ESSAY TEN

ROSH HASHANAH AND THE MONARCHY

A true king, by definition, is the most powerful, aloof, detached and exalted being.

There can be no greater gap between two entities as the gap that exists between a king and his subjects.

The king is also, paradoxically, the most devoted, attached and connected being, whose entire essence is his desire to serve the needs of his subjects.

No two entities can become so connected as the connection that exists between a loyal subject to a devoted monarch and vice versa.

ESSAY TEN

ROSH HASHANAH AND THE MONARCHY

The Coronation

Our Rosh Hashanah prayers are replete with references to G-d as our king. According to Chassidic thought, the entire Rosh Hashanah revolves around our acceptance of G-d as our king. Even the Shofar, the central mitzvah of the day, has been understood by R. Sa'adia Gaon as being similar to the "sounding the trumpets" of a coronation ceremony.

This raises several questions. First, why would G-d have to be proclaimed as our king every Rosh Hashanah? Why weren't past "coronation ceremonies" sufficient?

Many people have also expressed bewilderment at the emphasis we place on G-d's role as a king on Rosh Hashanah. Why would we want to use the metaphor of a king to describe G-d? Isn't a king a dictatorial tyrant? Haven't we suffered from so many king's whims and caprices?

The Deepest Relationship

In truth, the concept of royalty in its true form represents the most profound relationship that can exist between two entities. There are all sorts of relationships in our world:

Parent child; brother to brother; husband wife; teacher student, etc. But, as we probe more deeply into the king-subject relationship we will discover that in truth, there is no more profound relationship than the one that exists between a (real) king and his subjects.

To be sure, most kings throughout history were a far cry from the true definition of a king; but their role serves, nonetheless, as a limited metaphor, for our unique relationship with G-d.

A true king, by definition, is the most powerful, aloof, detached and exalted being. There can be no greater gap between two entities as the gap that exists between a king and his subjects.

The king is also, paradoxically, the most devoted, attached and connected being, whose entire essence is his desire to serve the needs of his subjects. No two entities can become so connected as the connection that exists between a loyal subject to a devoted monarch and vice versa.

A king is one who desires more than anything else to be the provider of all the needs of his subjects. However, since

the king is, by definition, so exalted and far removed from having any connection to his subjects, there must be a **continual** and **persistent** effort on the part of his subjects to awaken the king's latent desire to be connected to us.

In other words, the definition of a king is a person who is "head and shoulders" above everyone. This means that he is intellectually and emotionally in a different world. Yet deeply rooted in his personality is this desire to "lower" himself and to relate to even the lowliest subject with unparalleled devotion.

To accomplish this incredible process – of the most exalted being becoming the most empathetic being – it requires the efforts of the people. The subjects must show their utter devotion and acceptance of the king. The "coronation" ceremony is the process in which they express their innermost desire to proclaim the king as their king.

Recreate Relationship on Rosh Hashanah

And this is precisely what occurs every Rosh Hashanah. The natural state for G-d as our King is to be removed from His world. Thus, every Rosh Hashanah, we – G-d's subjects – must express our most profound feelings of devotion and acceptance of G-d from the very core of our souls; that we want to experience the most profound relationship that can exist. G-d then reciprocates by

desiring – from the very core and essence of His being – to be our King.

A "Mere" Sample

This most profound emotional and spiritual experience of Rosh Hashanah is but a sampling of what we will experience in the age of Redemption, when the entire world will collectively proclaim G-d as our King; when the most unique relationship between G-d and His world will become manifest for all.

This powerful and essential bond that will be realized will come through the leadership of a human monarch, Moshiach; a monarch who will enjoy all of the virtues and strengths of a monarch with none of the baggage and imperfections of the monarchs of yore.

May we all be inscribed for a wonderful, sweet year and may we merit the immediate revelation of Moshiach - when "G-d will be King of the entire world!" (Machzor)

ESSAY ELEVEN

OUR FATHER OUR KING

The shofar was chosen, not in spite of its simplicity, but because of it.

The shofar symbolizes and expresses the simple, incorruptible and essential nature of the soul which is connected to the "simple" and essential aspect of G-d.

ESSAY ELEVEN

OUR FATHER OUR KING

The World's Rebirth

There are two Hebrew words and feelings which dominate the atmosphere of Rosh Hashanah: "*Avinu Malkeinu*, Our **Father**, Our King." We relate to G-d as our Father during this time of the year, because Rosh Hashanah is the birth of a new year. We, the Jewish people, and, indeed the entire universe experience their rebirth and recreation on Rosh Hashanah. G-d's role as our Father is most pronounced on Rosh Hashanah, because Rosh Hashanah is when our role as His new-born child is likewise reinforced.

When we refer to G-d as our Father, we are expressing how special we are to Him. Indeed, the Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that the love G-d has for each and every one of us is analogous to and surpasses the love a father has for an only child born to him in his old age.

The Ba'al Shem Tov's Parable

When we hear the shofar this year, we should reflect on the Ba'al Shem Tov's parable of the errant prince, who, upon returning to his father, realizing he had forgotten his native language, broke down and cried from the depths of his heart, expressing the sentiment, if not the words, "Father, save me!"

This primal cry broke through the barriers which separated between father and son. And at that point his father took him into his embrace.

The shofar, i.e., the cry of the child within us, is our way of cementing our relationship with G-d in a manner that transcends the conventional modes of communication. It reveals the inner core of our being and reinforces and enhances the most powerful bonds which unite a parent to his/her child and a child to its parent. And no matter how far we've strayed throughout the year and lost our means to communicate with G-d, the shofar of Rosh Hashanah enables us to reconnect in a more fundamental and powerful way.

Shofar: The Instrument of Choice?

Of all the instruments one could have chosen to create an inspirational atmosphere, the shofar would have been the

last choice. So many other instruments have more beautiful and aesthetically pleasing sounds. Yet, the shofar was chosen, not in spite of its simplicity, but because of it. The shofar symbolizes and expresses the simple, incorruptible and essential nature of the soul which is connected to the "simple" and essential aspect of G-d.

The shofar is also the instrument our prophets refer to as the prelude to the Era of Redemption. Indeed, Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon includes the "Shofar of Redemption" theme among his ten reasons for the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. In other words, when hearing the shofar we are to think of G-d heralding the Redemption.

Shofar Unifies Rosh Hashanah and Moshiach

What is the connection between Rosh Hashanah and the Messianic Era? And why is the shofar the instrument that unites the two concepts?

For thousands of years, the Jewish people have wandered in exile. We have distanced ourselves from G-d in one way or another. And as a consequence of our alienation from G-d, we lost our means of communicating with Him. We are very much like the proverbial prince who has strayed. We, as the prince, have lost the means to communicate with the King. This is why *Galus* (exile) is so painful. Not only do we suffer when we stray from G-d, but, even when we wish to

return, there are all sorts of insurmountable obstacles. Even when we want to be more G-dly, we discover that we cannot communicate.

The Great Shofar

The Messianic Age is when the "Great Shofar," sounded by G-d, will pierce all barriers and penetrate beneath the surface of our beings and enable us to express the fundamental child/parent relationship we enjoy with G-d. All the exile-imposed barriers, all the "static" we presently experience in our communication with G-d, will disappear. And when the lines of communication between parent and child are unobstructed, the love between them will flourish.

The Shofar of Geulah (Redemption) will thus inaugurate a time when the love between G-d and the Jewish people - which was concealed throughout our difficult sojourn in exile - will be fully revealed.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year; a year of happiness and good health, and most importantly, a year of true peace and Redemption!

ESSAY TWELVE

THE CRY OF THE CHILD

Many thousands of Jews, even those who had no knowledge of Judaism and no interest in it, would nevertheless choose death rather than abandoning their G-d when they were confronted with the option to convert to another religion or die.

This inner G-dly spark is ignited with the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah

ESSAY TWELVE
THE CRY OF THE CHILD

Is the Objective Music?

The highlight of Rosh Hashanah is undeniably the sounding of the Shofar.

Our Sages of old asked why such emphasis on a rather simple and bland instrument? If the objective is music, then why not use a more sophisticated instrument? If the goal of Rosh Hashanah is a heartfelt prayer, why bother with the Shofar?

The Lost Prince

The Ba'al Shem Tov seemed to be addressing these very questions when he provided us with a parable to describe the power of the Shofar.

A mighty king had an only son. The king gave him the very best education. After all, he was the crown prince and the king's only son.

With all of the devotion he showered on his beloved son and heir to the throne, the king felt that something was still missing in his son's education. "I must send him far away to a foreign country to live with ordinary people, expose him to the hardships of life. Then he will truly be worthy of wearing the crown on my head."

The king bade farewell to his son and sent him off to a distant country, accompanied by a retinue of advisors and with a huge and full moneybag.

After months of acclimating himself to the new country, the crown prince dismissed all of his advisors, spent all of the money and found himself destitute. Searching for help he befriended a group of rather uncultured and immoral people. Many more months passed and the crown prince lost virtually every vestige of his royal upbringing. His clothing in tatters and his morals wanting he finally reached rock bottom at which point he felt a powerful urge to be back in the palace with his beloved father.

After months of traveling by foot, he finally arrived in the capital of his native country. He endured great hardship until he got close to the palace, for everyone he told that he was the Crown Prince just jeered and mocked him.

Now he was standing in front of the palace and it would be just seconds before he would talk to his father. How much he cherished this moment, until... until he realized that his father would never recognize him. Even worse, he wouldn't even be able to speak to his father because he had completely forgotten the language of his youth.

For the next few minutes he came to realize the hopelessness of the situation. How far he had strayed and how far he had returned only to discover that he had no way of communicating and reuniting with his father. His situation was so desperate and hopeless that he broke down and began to cry in his own garbled language: "Father, Father help me!"

The king immediately recognized the cry of his child. In seconds he found himself outside the palace gates taking his son into his warm embrace. The father and son were now together again.

The Story of our Lives

This parable is the story of our lives.

G-d is the King.

We are the Crown Prince, G-d's only child.

Our souls have received the best education in the heavenly academies. But to actualize our true potential, G-d sent the

soul into a faraway and hostile environment—a physical body and a physical world.

To be sure, G-d doesn't send us here alone. The sages and righteous leaders of Israel are the royal advisors who were sent to accompany us and give us guidance as to how we should deal with the harsh realities of life.

He also gives us "spending money;" the Mitzvos that we do that will help us acquire the right values and direction are the currency that gets us somewhere.

But, alas, we dismiss the advisors and squander the cash and we find ourselves spiritually destitute and as far as we can be from the royal upbringing we received.

To make things even worse, when we finally realize how far we've strayed and we come as close as we can to G-d on Rosh Hashanah, we realize that we don't even know how to communicate with G-d. The language of our *neshomos*, our souls has been forgotten by us. What do we do? How do we show G-d that we are sincere and that we've returned, when we cannot even express ourselves?

At that point, when this realization hits us, we sound the shofar which mimics the sound of the primal cry that emanates from the very core of our being. When G-d hears and senses the purity and innocence of our soul's cry, He comes out of His palace, so to speak, and take us into His embrace.

The shofar is the means through which we express a part of us that is rarely seen even by ourselves. With the shofar we are really in touch with the inner sanctum of our soul.

The Shofar of Crisis

Tragically, the Jewish people have had ample opportunity to discover their inner soul in situations of crisis and persecution. Many thousands of Jews, even those who had no knowledge of Judaism and no interest in it, would nevertheless choose death rather than abandoning their G-d when they were confronted with the option to convert to another religion or die.

Several years ago a group of Israelis were touring the Indian province of Kashmir, They were captured by a group of Muslim terrorists who told them that in five minutes they would be executed unless they would convert to Islam. The entire group—most of whom were totally "secular" Jews— responded, "No, we would rather die than abandon our religion." When the terrorist returned, the Israelis overpowered their attackers and fled. Tragically, one of the guns did go off and it killed on of the so-called "secular" Israeli's. His last words were, "I know this is G-d's will, I accept it..."

Purist Expression of Soul

This is what the Shofar means to us. It is the purist expression of our soul, the part of our soul that is never corrupted by all the external influences. And while we certainly do not wish a crisis on ourselves, we can express this aspect of our being every Rosh Hashanah when we hear the sound of the Shofar. For the Shofar digs deep into the essence of our soul and reveals unprecedented soul powers. The Shofar introduces us to ourselves.

The Shofar is also the instrument that G-d will use to introduce the future Redemption. As long as we are not in touch with our true selves, our souls are in exile. Redemption provides for the opportunity to actualize our soul's essence.

On Rosh Hashanah, when the Shofar sounds, we can get a taste of the future Redemption. The process of Redemption is also hastened when we tune into the profound sounds and message of the Shofar.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

ROSH HASHANAH: A DAY OF DELIGHT

Every Rosh Hashanah, our sages tell us, the process of creation comes to an end.

G-d's delight in being the King of the world is no longer a foregone conclusion.

It takes our efforts on Rosh Hashanah, of proclaiming G-d as our King, and especially the blowing of the Shofar, to get G-d to once more desire us and the entire universe.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

ROSH HASHANAH: A DAY OF DELIGHT

No Shofar this Year!

In a game of word association, the word Shofar would certainly elicit the word Rosh Hashanah as its partner. Shofar and Rosh Hashanah are inextricably bound together. Or at least, that is the way it seems.

What casts some doubt on this assertion is the Talmudic law that says that when Rosh Hashanah occurs on a *Shabbos* — as it does this year — we do not sound the Shofar until the next day. The reason the Talmud gives is rather difficult to understand. If Shofar sounding would have been permitted on Rosh Hashanah that occurs on a *Shabbos* it might lead to the transgression of the strict laws governing the *Shabbos*.

This explanation leaves us with an even greater question. If Shofar is so central to Rosh Hashanah and Shofar is so powerful a Mitzvah that inspires us to Teshuvah (sincere repentance and return to G-d), why then did the sages

decide to ban this Mitzvah because of a remote possibility that some uneducated or careless person might inadvertently violate the *Shabbos*?

Shabbos takes the Place of Shofar

Chassidic thought answers this question by referring to the deeper appreciation for the Mitzvah of blowing the Shofar and the deeper significance of the *Shabbos*. Upon examining these two observances from their inner dimension, we will see that when Rosh Hashanah occurs on a *Shabbos* there is no need for the Shofar because the *Shabbos* spirit itself takes the place of Shofar blowing. In other words, blowing the Shofar on *Shabbos* of Rosh Hashanah would be entirely redundant.

Translation of Shofar

To understand why Shofar and *Shabbos* are spiritually compatible we should reflect on the very meaning of the word Shofar. One of the meanings of the word Shofar is beauty or delight. The Shofar — with its capacity for arousing our souls to accept G-d as our king with absolute devotion and commitment — has the effect of "giving" G-d a sense of appreciation for the beauty of our lives. This, in

turn, enables Him to derive "delight" from our devotion to Him.

G-d finding Delight in His Creation

To better understand the concept of G-d deriving delight from our actions, we must discern between two forms of will. People can work for a living, so we must say that they want to work. Yet, it does not necessarily mean that they derive pleasure and enjoyment from their work.

Similarly, we know that G-d wants to do the "work" that is necessary in order to create the world. The proof of that is that He **did** create the world. But the fact that G-d wanted to create the world does not mean that He derives pleasure and satisfaction from it.

Every Rosh Hashanah, our sages tell us, the process of creation comes to an end. This means that G-d's delight in being the King of the world is no longer a foregone conclusion. It takes our efforts on Rosh Hashanah, of proclaiming G-d as our King, and especially the blowing of the Shofar, to get G-d to once more desire us and the entire universe.

To be sure, even if we were all to go to sleep on Rosh Hashanah, literally or figuratively, the world will still continue to exist; because G-d made a commitment that He

will never allow the world to be destroyed. However, then the relationship G-d has with His world will be a "sleepy" one, one that is devoid of enthusiasm and delight.

The Shofar, whose primal sound. is an expression of the most profound feelings of devotion to G-d, is the primary instrument that brings G-d infinite pleasure in His relationship with us and the world. Only our actions and commitment to making this world a "dwelling place" for G-d has the capacity to make G-d "feel comfortable," and derive pleasure, so to speak, from His world. This entire process is encapsulated within the Shofar.

Shabbos the Essence of Delight

This is true most of the time. When Rosh Hashanah occurs on a *Shabbos*, there is no need for the Shofar to accomplish this result of getting G-d to find delight in His world, because the very essence of *Shabbos* is pleasure and delight. We delight in *Shabbos* because it is the day when G-d completed His work and was able to feel the pleasure and delight in His creation.

Every *Shabbos*, then, the world experiences a powerful surge of Divine energy that permeates every aspect of our lives. On *Shabbos*, the natural state of existence is a mutual sense of infinite delight; it is the time for spiritual intimacy, where G-d and His people derive pleasure from each other.

This state of mutual pleasure and delight that *Shabbos* and Shofar effect, are also samples of what the world will experience with the coming of Moshiach. Then there will be a perpetual *Shabbos* relationship between G-d and His world.

A *Kasiva Vachasima Tovah*, May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year, a *Shabbos* year, a year of delight; a year of Redemption!

ESSAY FOURTEEN

WHAT'S NEW?

The new opportunity of Rosh Hashanah guarantees that all of the negative experiences of the past year do not impede our ability to turn over a new leaf.

A new surge of Divine energy on Rosh Hashanah makes it possible for us to begin a new life, despite our past shortcomings.

The new energies of Rosh Hashanah also challenge us to reach new heights in our service of G-d. What was sufficient and acceptable last year is not nearly enough this New Year.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

WHAT'S NEW?

The Same Old New Year

Rosh Hashanah is often referred to as the "New Year." The question can be asked. Isn't Rosh Hashanah merely the repetition of same cycle of days? Each year we go through the same number of days (in the Hebrew calendar it is usually 354) and this Rosh Hashanah will begin the 5,758th cycle – so what distinguishes this year of 5758, from all preceding years?

The Hebrew word *Shanah* (year) actually derives from a root that means "repetition," because during each year everything we had the past year is repeated once more. Isn't then the expression "New Year" an oxymoron?

Kabbalah teaches us that, in fact, every Rosh Hashanah, G-d introduces a new dimension of G-dly energy into the world that was never experienced before. Each Rosh Hashanah opens up new vistas and opportunities that were never available before.

Makes Life Easier even as it Challnges

Translated into practical terms, Rosh Hashanah makes life easier for us even as it poses a unique challenge. One the one hand, the new opportunity of Rosh Hashanah guarantees that all of the negative experiences of the past year do not impede our ability to turn over a new leaf. Though there might be some excessive negative baggage left over from the past that we still have to deal with, the new opportunities associated with a new surge of Divine energy on Rosh Hashanah makes it possible for us to begin a new life, despite our past shortcomings.

On the other hand, the fact that Rosh Hashanah is a new year with new Divine energies that are accessible to us, challenges us to reach new heights in our service of G-d. What was sufficient and acceptable last year is not nearly enough this New Year.

It is told that the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, would undertake to observe an additional custom or improvement in his fulfilling of the commandments. Notwithstanding his scrupulous devotion to every detail of Jewish law during the preceding year, he felt the need to grow even more with the arrival of the New Year.

As we await the onset of Rosh Hashanah of a New Year when the world will experience the departure of the life-

force that characterized the spiritual thrust of this past year, and the introduction of the new, unprecedented life-force of the next year, it is an opportune time to reflect on the unique circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Crossroads

We are at the crossroads. Our generation has been characterized as simultaneously the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption. We have witnessed some of the darkest moments in the history of the world – and at the same time we have seen the greatest advancements in peace, tranquility and quality of life.

But how can we synthesize the two diametrically opposed realities?

Rosh Hashanah teaches us that our past shortcomings don't need to be totally absolved before we can graduate to the next level. Likewise, the Messianic Age, will enable us to grow, even before we disentangle ourselves from the negativity that is associated with the present time of exile.

In addition, the Messianic Age, with its heightened level of Divine revelation will offer us a new challenge. We will be able to grow in ways that we can hardly imagine.

May we all experience a new year with new opportunities for spiritual growth and may we all merit the imminent

revelation of Moshiach who will lead us into a world of new blessings and opportunities - a good and sweet year!

ESSAY FIFTEEN

TESHUVAH: THE POWER OF RETURN

True regret involves taking full responsibility for one's misdeeds.

To regret the past and then give excuses for oneself, misses the whole point of Teshuvah.

For Teshuvah to be complete, one must take full responsibility for one's actions.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

TESHUVAH: THE POWER OF RETURN

More Crucial Now

Teshuvah, usually translated as repentance, but more accurately as return, is a process that permeates the Jewish calendar from the beginning of Elul through Yom Kippur. But at no time is the theme of Teshuvah so prominent as in the Ten Days of Teshuvah in general and the *Shabbos* Teshuvah (the Sabbath of Teshuvah) in particular.

By Divine providence, the entire country is discussing the issue of repentance. What does it take to procure atonement? How does one change? Should we accept the person wo claims to have repented? These are some of the questions that have been discussed recently.

Fortunately for us, the Jewish religion has had much to say about Teshuvah. Let us begin our discussion with a breakdown of the most important components of Teshuvah as they were understood by our Talmudic sages, Maimonides, R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi and the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Basic Requirements for Teshuvah

The most basic requirement for Teshuvah is a resolution for the future. For example: A thief who wishes to repent, must resolve to never steal again. How do we know that he has resolution is sincere? According to Jewish law, his intentions must be supported by action. Obviously, he must return all the stolen goods he has in is possession.

Secondly, he must destroy all the "tools" of his trade. When actions demonstrate his sincere resolve not to commit this crime again, he can once more be accepted into the community and serve as a witness in a court.

But, that resolve is unlikely to endure without the thief truly experiencing remorse and regret for the past.

True regret involves taking full responsibility for one's misdeeds. To regret the past and then give excuses for oneself, misses the whole point of Teshuvah.

For Teshuvah to be complete, one must take full responsibility for one's actions.

The Fundamental Level of Teshuvah

However, even the most fleeting thought of resolve to be better in the future suffices for G-d's forgiveness.

This is clearly the opinion of the Alter Rebbe as explained by the Rebbe and is based on the rulings of Maimonides.

There are two sources in the Talmud that support this conclusion:

The first source is the scenario in the Talmud of one who gives a woman an article of value and tells her he is marrying her with the stipulation that he is a righteous person. It was later discovered that he had just committed a crime. The marriage is still considered valid for perhaps in the few moments between the commission of the crime and the time he made the stipulation he might have harbored a fleeting thought of Teshuvah.

Obviously, this quickie form of Teshuvah is not the ideal Teshuvah but it works to transform one form the state of *rasha*-being in G-d's bad graces to the state of *tzadik*-winning his case and being spared punishment.

The second source is the law in the Talmud that a gambler, who has been invalidated as a witness in a Jewish court, can be reinstated as soon as he breaks his dice. All it takes to regain your legitimacy is the mere demonstration of your resolve for the future.

All the other components of Teshuvah such as remorse for the past are intended to help cleanse the person from the negative energy that one has internalized as a result of the sin. While G-d forgives us even without the remorse, we

still want to cleanse ourselves, especially when Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur arrive.

Our Plea to G-d

As we stand before G-d on Rosh Hashanah we humbly say to Him:

"Our Father and King, right now we only have the strength to make a commitment for the future; we're not strong enough to go through the entire catharsis of Teshuvah.

G-d accepts that and gives us a good and sweet year.

On the Threshold

What was said about Teshuvah is especially relevant as we stand on the threshold a New Age, the Age of Redemption.

Some say that they are not ready for Moshiach and Redemption for they have not yet cleansed themselves sufficiently.

In general, this is a callous statement because it implies that the whole world with all of its pain and suffering has to wait before one individual is ready.

But, more specifically, G-d wants us to simply make a commitment for the future that we want Him to be our King and be revealed. G-d wants us to implore Him to

bring an end to the pain and suffering and the compromised spirituality that we experience.

Once Moshiach is here we will then work on cleansing and purifying ourselves.

Right now G-d wants us to want a change for the future.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

ALL SEVENS ARE PRECIOUS

Rosh Hashanah, as the beginning of the *seventh* month, expresses the need to find meaning and purpose in all that preceded Rosh Hashanah.

All of our last year's good deeds resemble a cacophony of disparate notes and musical sounds.

Rosh Hashanah is the Maestro who unites them into one beautiful symphony.

All the good of the past year can then be tapped for their maximum spirituality and effectiveness.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

ALL SEVENS ARE PRECIOUS

New Year – Seventh Month?

Everybody knows Rosh Hashanah as the Jewish New Year. It is therefore startling to many that the Torah refers to this Holy Day, as "the first day of the **seventh** month." Why would Rosh Hashanah, which means *head* of the year, occur in the year's *seventh* month?

To clarify this enigma, let us dwell for a moment on the significance of the number seven in Jewish thought. The Midrash declares: "all sevens are precious."

To better understand the significance of seven, a discussion of the *Shabbos*, the most famous of the "sevens," is in order. For six days a person can contribute to society and yet feel unfulfilled. *Shabbos* enables us to withdraw from our work and view our accomplishments from a different perspective, by seeing them in their cumulative state, thereby deriving pleasure from them. The *Shabbos* is the day that validates our entire week.

What is true of the *Shabbos* is also true of Moses, the seventh generation from Abraham. Abraham was the first person to publicly proclaim the belief in one G-d and the values of justice and righteousness. The objective of Abraham's life's work was only realized during the seventh generation, when Moses liberated Abraham's progeny from Egypt, gave them the Torah and then built the Mishkan – the portable Tabernacle, or, Sanctuary – to facilitate G-d's dwelling among the Jews, Then Abraham's legacy was made real and permanent.

The number seven, thus, in Judaism represents, completing a cycle, bringing unity, fulfillment and meaning to an idea.

The First Month

The first month of the year, according to the Torah, is the month of Nissan, at which time G-d "descended" to extricate the Jewish nation out of Egyptian bondage and depravity. The Jews, our sages tell us, were not ready to be liberated. Centuries of slavery and assimilation took their toll.

This choice G-d made to unilaterally liberate the Jewish people despite their lack of worthiness, appeared arbitrary and without merit.

Only the "seventh month" season of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot, when Jews proclaim their acceptance of G-d as their King and return to Him with all their hearts, lends legitimacy to G-d's selection of the Jews during the month of Nissan.

Rosh Hashanah, thus, as the beginning of the *seventh* month, expresses the need to find meaning and purpose in all that preceded Rosh Hashanah. All of our last year's good deeds resemble a cacophony of disparate notes and musical sounds. Rosh Hashanah is the Maestro who unites them into one beautiful symphony. All the good of the past year can then be tapped for their maximum spirituality and effectiveness.

We are the Seventh Generation

The Rebbe – from the day he assumed leadership of the Chabad movement in 1951 – declared that we are the *seventh* generation since the founding of the Chabad Chassidic movement, whose objective it was to disseminate G-dly teaching to the world, to pave the way for the future Redemption.

Accordingly, the Rebbe informed us repeatedly, that we were given the unique capacity to complete the task of making the world a dwelling place for G-d in a way that eluded even our more illustrious forebears.

The challenge of being the seventh generation is to bring cohesiveness and meaning to all of what preceded us. As the Rebbe declared, "our generation is the last generation of exile and [will be] the first generation of Redemption."

May we all be inscribed for a good and sweet year

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

THIS IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!

All Jewish holidays occur on the anniversary of some major historical event. What event does Rosh Hashanah immortalize?

The answer is: "This is the day that is the beginning of Your work."

This day is not just an historical event, it is the day that the very concept of history, along with all else that exists, came into being.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

THIS IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

Which Historical Evet does Rosh Hashanah Commemorate?

> "This is the day that is the beginning of Your work..."

With these words, recited in the Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashanah, we address a question that many have asked: Why do we observe the Jewish New Year on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei? All Jewish holidays occur on the anniversary of some major historical event. What event does Rosh Hashanah immortalize?

The answer is: "This is the day that is the beginning of Your work." This day is not just an historical event, it is the day that the very concept of history, along with all else that exists, came into being. If Passover is significant because it marks the season of freedom, then Rosh Hashanah is the day that gave us the very notion of freedom. There can be no Passover, or any other holiday for that matter, without creation.

Creation of Universe or Humanity?

But here is where the most obvious question arises. When one examines the Talmudic source for the identification of Rosh Hashanah as the anniversary of creation, one discovers that it is actually the anniversary of the creation of humanity and not of the entire universe. Why then do we attribute the "beginning of Your works" to this day and not the real anniversary of creation that is the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul - six days before Rosh Hashanah?

One of the answers to this question lies in the very first word of the sentence with which we opened. "*Zeh hayom*-This is the day]" It could have just stated "Today is..." Why the need for the opening word "*Zeh*-This?"

Creation of Openness and Certainty

When we use the term "this" we are referring to something that is revealed and open for us to see. So open and vivid is it that we can even "point our finger" and declare "This is it!"

Rosh Hashanah is more than the beginning of creation. It is the day that introduced the dimension of openness, certainty and a revealed state of G-dliness within the world.

Instead of translating the phrase "*Zeh hayom*" as "This is the day," Chassidic thought translates it in an inverse way

as: "Today is the day of "this." Today - Rosh Hashanah - is the day that introduced the notion of revealing G-d to the world. Precisely because this is the day that man was created it can be characterized as the day of revelation. For only man has the capacity to see G-d and reveal His presence to the world.

The True Uniqueness of the Human Being

Only man - who is endowed with the ability to choose between right and wrong - can take an object and instill it with G-dly meaning by choosing to utilize it for a good purpose.

To illustrate: A dollar bill has no overt spiritual and G-dly nature. True, it is part of G-d's creation, but the way it came into being involved a process that screened the G-dly energy that made it be. The Kabbalists referred to this screening process as Tzimtzum.

Only the human-being - whose G-dly soul has eluded the screening process, when performing a mitzvah, a Divine command that transcends the screening process - can transform the dollar bill that is given to tzedakah, into a palpably G-dly piece of material. The dollar bill, when given to tzedakah no longer obscures its G-dly nature. The potential for this process was inaugurated on Rosh Hashanah.

Moshiach: The Power of "This" Fully Activated

The Shofar that alerts us to realize our unique role as humans on the anniversary of our creation, will also be sounded to herald the coming of Moshiach. For it is Moshiach who will bring to fruition the process that was begun by the first human on Rosh Hashanah - Adam.

Indeed, our sages tell us that the word Adam is an acronym for: Adam, David and Moshiach. Adam began the process, David developed it by laying the foundations for the Temple in Jerusalem that would disseminate holiness to the entire world and Moshiach will complete the process.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year!

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

BREAKING DOWN THE GATES

The Ba'al Shem Tov once remarked:

Liturgy can be compared to a key that opens the gates of heaven for us.

However, prayer that is said with sincerity and heartfelt emotion is like an ax that can break through any gate and barrier.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

BREAKING DOWN THE GATES

Multiple Versions of Prayer

The Days of Awe are upon us. We will soon be ushering in a new year and asking G-d for all that is good. These are days when we experience an acute closeness to G-d, and when we connect to Him, especially through the prayers we recite in these Days of Awe.

And while there some uniform prayers that are recited in all congregations, one is frequently baffled by the different versions of the prayer book.

This question about the multiple *nuscha'os*, or versions of the liturgy was addressed by the great Chassidic leader Rabbi DovBer, known as the Maggid of Mezritch, and the successor to the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidic movement.

The following is based on a translation by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan (*The Chasidic Masters*/Moznaim)

The question was raised as to why there are different customs regarding the order of prayer [such as Ashkenaz

and Sepharad], and how each individual should pray.

The Thirteen Gates

Rabbi Dovber cites a tradition of our Sages that when a person would enter and leave the Holy Temple, he would have to bow 13 times, paralleling the 13 gates of the Temple. These are also alluded to in the Book of Ezekiel, which prophesies about the future Temple. There he states that each tribe will have its own gate when the holiness of Jerusalem is restored to the status it had in the time of the Temple.

What is the significance of these thirteen gates?

It is known that the Temple here on earth paralleled the celestial Temple. The Holy Temple on high therefore also has a gate for each tribe, as explained in the writings of the great sixteenth century Kabbalist, the Ari.

The term gate in relation to the spiritual Temple is that it was the channel through which G-d's light and energy would be generated into the world and into the souls of each individual.

Paralleling these gates were the 13 times that a person had to bow. These kneelings involved the transmission of the spiritual sustenance that flows through these gates.

The concept of prayer is therefore the key with which each

individual enters through his own gate. We are thus taught that prayer is "the ladder standing on earth, with its head reaching the heavens". (Gen. 28:12) Each gate has its own combination, and it is for this reason that there are different orders of prayer. Each of the twelve tribes has its own liturgy that corresponds to the spiritual composition and needs of that particular tribe.

The Generic Version

The thirteenth gate, however, is for the individual who does not know from which of the twelve tribes he originates. Since he does not know which gate to use, he can use this one to enter the King's courtyard.

Thus there used to be thirteen different liturgies, one for each tribe that best expressed the individual character of that tribe. The thirteenth gate was a "generic" one that fit every tribe.

Rabbi Dove Ber then proceeds to show the connection of the thirteen gates to the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy that are invoked during these upcoming Days of Awe.

The last of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy is the one called "*v'nakeh*-and He cleanses." As it is the last of the Thirteen Attributes it incorporates the preceding twelve.

Rabbi Dovber then identifies the thirteenth—all

encompassing—version of the liturgy as the one that is based on the teachings of the Ari.

Knowing the paths of heaven as he did, the G-dly Ari taught a way for those who do not know from which tribe they originate. For this reason, he arranged a special order of prayer based on all the others.

It may then be asked why the other twelve gates were needed, since they are all included in the thirteenth. Why is the thirteenth gate not enough?

The answer is, however, that each tribe originally knew its own particular order of prayer, and it was certainly best for each one to enter through its own gate.

Now that people do not know the tribe of their origin, and we also do not know which customs apply to which tribes, it is best to follow the order arranged by the Ari, which is universal.

The prophet Ezekiel predicted that in the Ultimate Future there would only be twelve gates in Jerusalem [one for each tribe]. The reason for this is that everyone will then know his own tribe.

The Ax of Prayer

The Ba'al Shem Tov once remarked that while the liturgy can be compared to a key that opens the gates of heaven

for us, prayer that is said with sincerity and heartfelt emotion is like an ax that can break through any gate and barrier.

Whichever of the "thirteen gates" is ours, let us truly unite—and break through all the barriers— with the one desire we all have: to be blessed with a year of peace in the Land of Israel and peace throughout the world — with the coming of our righteous Moshiach. Amen!

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE PROSECUTION RESTS

Sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, Maimonides writes, is to awaken us from our involvement in worldly pursuits and to alert us to our responsibilities as Jews.

The Shofar reminds us as to what is truly important in our lives and rouses us to sincerely turn to G-d.

ESSAY NINETEEN
THE PROSECUTION RESTS

Confounding the Satan

As we approach the end of the year, it is customary to increase our acts of goodness and kindness. We also have a custom to sound the Shofar every day of this month (with the exception of the *Shabbos*). Yet, on the day before Rosh Hashanah, Jewish Law tells us that this preparatory Shofar blowing should be skipped.

The only thing more peculiar than that ruling is the reason given for it: the Shofar is not blown in order to "confound the Satan." Simply put, if we don't blow the Shofar, the Satan will think that we have finished with the Shofar for the year, that somehow Rosh Hashanah has already passed, and he will therefore neglect to appear in the heavenly court on the New Year and act as an accusing angel – guaranteeing that the Jews will be inscribed for a sweet New Year.

What is the meaning of all this? Does the Jewish religion

really believe in Satan? Isn't this what the other religions believe in? And how can we confuse him?

The Jewish View of Satan: G-d's Instrument

In truth, the word and concept of Satan is derived from the Torah. Satan, Judaism teaches us, is the Biblical term for one of G-d's holy angels who has the sad job of creating obstacles (indeed, the Hebrew word Satan actually means "obstacle.") for us in our pursuit of doing good to "balance the playing field."

He is the accusing angel who tries to present arguments against G-d's doing anything positive for humanity.

During the High Holiday season, it is this angel who is charged by G-d Himself, to argue against granting us a sweet and healthy year. Much like a court appointed lawyer who has to argue in defense of a reprehensible criminal, the Satan, must unwillingly argue against the best interests of the Jewish people.

Doesn't He have a Calendar?

But can such a simple ploy (of not sounding the Shofar the day before Rosh Hashanah) trick an angel of G-d? Can't Satan look at a calendar and see when Rosh Hashanah will be? Even if this ploy did work once, can't we assume that

after a few years Satan became wise to our tricks and won't fall for the deception again?

The Purpose of Shofar on Rosh Hashanah

Chassidic thought puts this rather strange discussion in its proper light. The purpose of sounding the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah, Maimonides writes is to awaken us from our involvement in worldly pursuits and to alert us to our responsibilities as Jews.

The Shofar reminds us as to what is truly important in our lives and rouses us to sincerely turn to G-d. This is the essence of the message of Rosh Hashanah, which, when taken seriously, will guarantee us to be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year.

Getting a Head Start

Now when Jewish tradition established the custom of starting to blow the Shofar a full 30 days in advance of Rosh Hashanah, from the beginning of the month of Elul, the idea was to get a "head start on the Holiday." By hearing the holy and awesome blasts of the Shofar throughout Elul, the intent is that we should be inspired to turn to G-d and grow to a whole new level — even before the onset of Rosh Hashanah.

Thus, when we skip the blowing of the Shofar on the eve of the New Year, we are, in effect saying that we don't need the inspiration of the Shofar to awaken us to Teshuvah and repentance. After a full month of hearing the Shofar we have sufficiently developed to the point that we have truly reached a high level of Teshuvah.

Omitting the Shofar on that day is not a ploy to trick the Satan but a sincere statement that reflects the great spiritual growth we have experienced during the month of Elul. This reality, which Satan is well aware of, is indeed confounding to him. How can he claim before G-d that we are not deserving of a sweet New Year when he knows that, by virtue of the fact that we didn't blow the Shofar on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, we have grown in our service of G-d by leaps and bounds? Satan knows full well that Rosh Hashanah will soon be here, but he also knows that he has no argument to make in the heavenly court. He has indeed been confounded.

Satan's Attempts to Obstruct Path to Redemption

The New Year can be likened to the New Era that is associated with the coming of Moshiach at which time the whole world will hear G-d sounding the Great Shofar to awaken us spiritually. The Satan has been trying for some time to obstruct our path towards that goal.

When we live in a manner that is characteristic of a Messianic Age, by doing good in a wholesome and uncompromising way, thereby awakening our inner reservoir of goodness and holiness, we confound the Satan because he realizes that he cannot stop us in our spiritual growth and the Era of total peace and holiness will be ushered in imminently!

ESSAY TWENTY

TALMUD, ROSH HASHANAH 10B

WHAT HAPPENED ON ROSH HASHANAH?

R. Eliezer says "The world was created in Tishrei.

In actuality, the creation of the world occurred 6 days earlier on the 25th of Elul.

Rosh Hashanah, the first day of Tishrei, is actually the anniversary of the sixth day of creation; the day in which the first man was created.

Without humanity, creation has no purpose or meaning.

ESSAY TWENTY

TALMUD, ROSH HASHANAH 10B

WHAT HAPPENED ON ROSH HASHANAH?

It has been taught [in a Beraisa]:

A *Beraisa* is an authoritative source of Jewish law, of *Tanaitic* origin that was compiled at the same time as the Mishnah.

Rabbi Eliezer says "The world was created in Tishrei.

In actuality, the creation of the world occurred 6 days earlier on the 25th of Elul. Rosh Hashanah, the first day of Tishrei, is actually the anniversary of the sixth day of creation; the day in which the first man was created. Without humanity, creation has no purpose or meaning.

In addition, *Meharsha* explains, Rosh Hashanah was established on the first of Tishrei was because on that day Adam was also judged for his transgression; he also repented and G-d compassionately forgave him. G-d chose

to make Rosh Hashanah associated with acts of judgment followed by compassion.

The month of Tishrei is actually the seventh month of the year. The fact that it is the seventh month accords it the status of a holy and exalted month, in the same manner that the seventh day of the week, the *Shabbos*, is the most holy day of the week. This month is thus regarded as the head of the year.

(Indeed the word Tishrei incorporates the Hebrew word Rosh, which means head.)

While Nissan is a more vibrant month occurring as it does in the spring, the time when nature is in full bloom, (and is therefore likened to the heart that is actively involved in pumping blood to the whole body) it cannot compare to the holiness of Tishrei.

Rabbi Eliezer is thus of the opinion that G-d would have created His world in a month of holiness rather than in a month of life. (*Maharal)*

The *Mahara*l connects the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua as to whether the world was created in Nissan or Tishrei with another dispute of theirs as to whether wisdom is associated with the head or the heart. Rabbi Eliezer, who maintains that it is in the head, is consistent here and considers Tishrei to be the more

suitable month for G-d to create the world (with wisdom) since it is associated with the head.

The Patriarchs i.e., Abraham and Jacob ***were born in Tishrei.***

The Patriarchs were the people who succeeded in correcting that which the first people (Adam and Eve) destroyed. The Patriarchs were the very foundation of the world. It therefore follows that the Patriarchs would be created at the same time of Adam and Eve.

Moreover, despite the fact that the world acquired meaning with the creation of Adam on Rosh Hashanah, the world was still lacking the spiritual light that would enable it to realize its potential. This was rectified when the Patriarchs entered the world, particularly, Abraham and Jacob. Abraham was the first Jew, concerning whom the Midrash declares: "With the emergence of Abraham it started to get light.." and Jacob was the father of the twelve tribes, the progenitors of the entire Jewish people.

Meharsha explains that the Patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob, personified the Divine attributes of kindness and mercy, respectively. Rosh Hashanah is the right time to invoke G-d's mercy by referring to these Patriarchs.

The Patriarchs Died in Tishrei.

The Talmud bases this assertion on a tradition derived from the Torah's description of Moses' passing that G-d sees to it that righteous people pass away on the day that they were born. This is to indicate that they lead complete lives. Whenever it is not known when a righteous person has passed away, we can assume that it was on his birthday. This is a way of saying that righteous people are defined by their success in realizing their spiritual potential.

Isaac was born on Passover.

His birth on Passover, was the point at which G-d promised the 400 years of exile. From Isaac's birth to the Exodus was precisely 400 years. (*Iyun* Ya'akov)

Meharsha explains that Isaac was not born on Rosh Hashanah as were the other Patriarchs, because, Isaac personified the Divine attribute of judgment which is more appropriate for Passover, the day on which G-d exercised His attribute of judgment against the Egyptians.

[Meharsha's explanation needs clarification, for it is well-known that Passover actually corresponds to the Patriarch Abraham and the attribute of kindness. The Exodus was G-d's expression of infinite kindness to liberate the Jewish people and to override His attribute of justice. How then

do we reconcile this with the birth of Isaac who personifies judgment with Passover? The reconciliation of this matter is for another occasion, G-d willing.]

It may be suggested that whereas Abraham and Jacob represented the power of the Patriarchs to sustain the world, Isaac's birth, which was entirely miraculous, was more closely associated with Nissan, the month of miracles.

Sarah, Rachel and Channah were remembered on Rosh Hashanah.

According to Rashi, It doesn't necessarily mean that they conceived on Rosh Hashanah, but that G-d remembered them, i.e., recognized their plight and decreed that they conceive. Rashi obviously deduced this from the fact that Isaac was born on Passover, only six months after Rosh Hashanah.

Joseph left prison on Rosh Hashanah.

Joseph's release was connected to Pharaoh's dream. Inasmuch as Pharaoh was the leader of the world's most mighty empire and his dream related to the very survival of the world, it is reasonable to assume that it had occurred on Rosh Hashanah. Joseph's release was directly related to the saving of the world*. (Iyun Ya'akov).*

Maharal states that Joseph was the seventh of the sons of Jacob and he is associated with the seventh month of Tishrei.

Our ancestors in Egypt ceased working on Rosh Hashanah.

Despite the fact that the Ten Plagues had already begun months earlier, during the month of Nissan, nevertheless, they did not stop working as slaves until Rosh Hashanah. *(Tosphos)* This demonstrates either the ruthlessness of the Egyptians or the submissiveness of the Israelites. For even as the Egyptians were enduring the worst suffering, they still managed to enslave the Jews.

What connection is there between Rosh Hashanah and the end of the Egyptian bondage?

Iyun Ya'akov suggests that it is tied in with Joseph's release from prison on Rosh Hashanah. This is based on the Talmudic premise that the Egyptian bondage was a punishment for the sin of Joseph's sale to Egypt by his brothers. Thus, since Joseph was liberated on Rosh Hashanah, so were the Jews relieved of the slave labor on Rosh Hashanah.

One may ask, why then wasn't the Exodus on Rosh Hashanah? The answer is that there are actually two reasons for the bondage. The primary reason was the decree at the "Covenant between the Pieces" that G-d made

with Abraham that his children will be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years. That began on Passover — the day Isaac was born, as was noted before — and it therefore ended on Passover. The transgression of Joseph's sale added on to the severity of the bondage. That ended on Rosh Hashanah, just as Joseph was released then.

According to Maharal Rosh Hashanah is when we surrender ourselves to the Supreme King of Kings. There is no basis, therefore, to be subservient to any other king.

Israel was redeemed in Nissan, but Israel will be redeemed in Tishrei."

Despite the fact that redemption is associated with the month of Nissan, the future Redemption will take place in the month of Tishrei. The reason for this, *Iyun Ya'akov* explains is that the first Exodus, the Jewish people were not worthy of. They needed the merit of their Patriarchs to et them out. The future redemption, by contrast, will be one that we will deserve because it will preceded by Teshuvah. Thus, the future Redemption will be in Tishrei, the month of Teshuvah. This is not to suggest that the Redemption cannot come in any other month. It just means that this month is the most suited for Redemption.

Iyun Ya'akov furnishes yet another explanation. R. Eliezer is consistent with his earlier view that the world was created

in Tishrei. Thus, Redemption, which is the time the world will realize its ultimate objective, will also occur at the same time.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

ROSH HASHANAH TEXT FOR JEWISH MEDITATION

"Abraham was one," means that Abraham popularized the concept of G-d's unity into the world.

This concept was actually introduced on the first day of the seventh month, the day of Adam's creation.

Upon his creation, on Rosh Hashanah, Adam, declared to the entire universe, "G-d is King. He has garbed Himself with grandeur," (Psalm 93:1) "Come, let us prostrate ourselves and bow down; let us bend our knees before G-d our Maker." (Psalm 95:6)

Every Rosh Hashanah, the unity of G-d is reintroduced into the world - the role of Abraham.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE
ROSH HASHANAH TEXT FOR JEWISH MEDITATION

(Abridged and adapted from a Chassidic discourse of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, *Sefer HaMa'amarim*, 5730, p. 1-5)

> **"The first day of the seventh month shall be a calling of holiness [a sacred holiday] to you when you may not do any mundane work. It shall be a day of sounding the [ram's] horn." (Numbers 29:1)**

The Midrash states::

> "The **first** [**echad**] day of the month" refers to [the Patriarch] Abraham, as it says: "Abraham was one [**echad**]." (Ezekiel 33:24)
>
> "A **calling** of holiness" refers to Jacob, as it says, "Listen to me Jacob and Israel the one whom I **called**." (Isaiah 48:12)

> "A day of sounding the horn" refers to Isaac, as it says "And he saw and behold there was a ram." (Genesis, 22:13)

We must understand the order of the Patriarchs in the Midrash. The chronological order of the Patriarchs is: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Why does the Torah preface the words "a calling of holiness" that is a reference to Jacob, before the words "a day of sounding" that is a reference to Isaac?

We must also understand why the Midrash identifies the "seventh month" with the patriarchs. Don't we mention the patriarchs several times **every** day? What is the specific connection between Rosh Hashanah and the Patriarchs?

"Abraham was one," means that Abraham popularized the concept of G-d's unity into the world. As the Torah states that Abraham "called out there in the name of G-d, G-d [of the] universe." (Genesis 21:33) It does not say G-d *of the* universe, but just "G-d universe, " to underscore that the universe itself is not distinct from G-d, but is itself a manifestation of G-d.

This concept was actually introduced on the first day of the seventh month, the day of Adam's creation. Upon his creation, on Rosh Hashanah, Adam, declared to the entire

universe, "G-d is King. He has garbed Himself with grandeur," (Psalm 93:1) "Come, let us prostrate ourselves and bow down; let us bend our knees before G-d our Maker." (Psalm 95:6) Every Rosh Hashanah, the unity of G-d is reintroduced into the world - the role of Abraham.

Summary: Question is raised as to why Rosh Hashanah is identified with the Patriarchs, in the order of: Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. Abraham represents the introduction of G-d's unity to the world.

The word Jacob, rearranged, forms the word *Yibaka,* as in the verse "then your light shall break through [*yibaka*] as the dawn." (Isaiah 58:8) According to the Zohar, this verse was originally said by Jacob.

The concept of "breaking through" is the process of breaking through the *tzimzum* [the G-d made barrier which prevents the G-dly light from overwhelming the universe].

This means that on Rosh Hashanah we are capable of reaching a level of Divine energy, so powerful and transcendent that it pierces through the *tzimzum*.

Because this light is beyond the *tzimzum*, it can therefore penetrate and permeate the entire universe. This is a more advanced state than Abraham. Abraham, in spite of his ability to introduce the Divine light into the world, could not permeate the world with this light. By contrast, the light that Jacob introduced was fully internalized and distributed evenly to all levels.

The rationale for Jacob's ability to permeate the world is based on the verse: "give truth [*Shabbos*] to Jacob." The meaning of *Shabbos* is that it is consistent and can extend to every level equally. No barrier stands in the way of *Shabbos.*

This is the deeper meaning of "a calling of holiness." The Zohar associates the word "holiness" [*kodesh*, as opposed to the word *kadosh*, which contains the elongated letter vav, that connotes holiness that is of a diminished nature, having been filtered by the process of *tzimzum,* that can therefore be extended and made accessible to the lower levels of existence], with a measure of G-dly light that is independent and transcendent.

On Rosh Hashanah, Jacob's characteristic of invoking the most transcendent light of Hashem, enabling it to pierce through every barrier, is dominant. We are thus capable of "calling" and inviting even this level of holiness called "*kodesh*."

With the passage of each year this process becomes even more pronounced, in light of the *Alter Rebbe's* explanation that every year, on Rosh Hashanah, a new light is introduced into the world; an unprecedented light, that was not in evidence even during the period of the first Temple in its prime!

Summary: Jacob represents the attribute of truth and the transcendent light of G-d that penetrates and permeates.

"A day of sounding" refers to Isaac. In the Torah there is a contradiction: In one verse it refers to the day as "a day of sounding the horn," in another verse it says, "a remembrance of sounding the horn." The answer is that when Rosh Hashanah coincides with the *Shabbos* we only remember the Shofar. And even though the restriction of sounding the Shofar on the *Shabbos* is of a rabbinical nature, the Torah suggests that when Rosh Hashanah does occur on a *Shabbos*, the shofar is only a "remembrance" or a "glimmer" of its original role. Why is this so?

The word for sounding [*teruah*: broken sound] is representative of *gevuros*, severity, judgment. *Shabbos* is mystically the time when all judgment and severity is neutralized. This is the characteristic of Isaac, whose name derives from the word laughter and delight and yet, Isaac

personified *gevurah.* The power of delight can sweeten severity and judgment. When severity is sweetened with kindness, the power of kindness is even stronger than it is by itself. Then the flow of kindness is in a manner of *gevurah*, with force. Indeed, the alternative spelling of Isaac in Hebrew, *Yischak*, is reference to the intensified flow of kindness to be inaugurated in the future Messianic Age, as is stated, "then we will fill our mouths with laughter [*schok*]."

Isaac's contribution thus goes beyond those of Abraham and Jacob, because it is Isaac who represents the **forceful** flow of kindness.

Summary: Isaac represents the intensified flow of kindness that derives from the "sweetening of the judgments through kindness."

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

THE UNSHOFAR (2)

Shabbos is not only a day of the week, it is also a mindset. There can be two distinct—legitimate—views of life: A weekday perspective and a *Shabbos* perspective.

The "weekday person" views himself or herself as a product of the world and the environment in which he or she lives, where *Shabbos* is an escape from this reality.

A *Shabbos* personality breathes the air of Shabbos throughout the week. His or her reality is Shabbos.

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO
THE UNSHOFAR (2)

No Shofar on Shabbos

When Rosh Hashanah occurs on *Shabbos* we do not sound the Shofar. So states the Talmud. The rationale for this law is that there is a fear that in the course of trying to learn how to sound the *Shofar* one might inadvertently, or out of ignorance of the Sabbath laws, violate the sanctity of the Sabbath.

Commentators expressed puzzlement at the rabbis banning the sounding of the Shofar. Why would they deny all of Jewry the opportunity to fulfill a Mitzvah as meaningful and holy as the sounding of the Shofar, just because there is a remote possibility that a small number of individuals might inadvertently break the Sabbath?

Chassidic literature is replete with profound mystical explanations as to why, in truth, there is no need for the sounding of the Shofar when Rosh Hashanah occurs on a

Shabbos. The spiritual energy of *Shabbos* takes the place of the Mitzvah of sounding Shofar. Sounding the Shofar then would actually be redundant.

The Shabbos Mindset

There is yet another explanation for this anomaly that views Rosh Hashanah occurring on a *Shabbos* metaphorically.

Shabbos is not only a day of the week, it is also a mindset. There can be two distinct—legitimate—views of life: A weekday perspective and a *Shabbos* perspective. To be sure, both the weekday individual and the *Shabbos* oriented individual labor six days a week and rest on the *Shabbos*. Yet there is a difference as to the way they look at the time and experience of labor and the time and experience of *Shabbos*.

The "weekday person" views himself or herself as a product of the world and the environment in which he or she lives. The Biblical statement, from the Book of Job, "A person was born to toil," describes their weltanschauung. The *Shabbos* experience, to this "weekday" oriented individual is an escape from their reality, enabling them to return once more to their world of labor and worldly involvement refreshed and rejuvenated.

A "weekday" individual defines himself or herself, essentially, as a weekday person. *Shabbos* is what a weekday person does, not what he or she is.

Conversely, a *Shabbos* personality is one who defines himself or herself as a *Shabbos* person. During *Shabbos* they are in their natural element. During the weekdays, though they are involved in the very same activities as the "weekday" individual, they feel how each day and each experience as foreign to their true and essential identity and they endeavor to make every weekday experience serve as a preparation for the *Shabbos*.

If we have to classify people, one could say that most of us fit the former mold—weekday people. However, occasionally, there are times that some of us cross over into *Shabbos* territory. And there are appropriate occasions for all of us to try to experience a *Shabbos* existence even during weekdays and weekday experiences.

Rosh Hashanah on Shabbos Transforms Every Day into Shabbos

Since Rosh Hashanah is more than just the beginning of a new year, it is the "head" of the year, it stands to reason that a year whose "head" is a *Shabbos* head, will imbue the spirit of *Shabbos* in all of the other days ("organs") of the year that follow.

And this, perhaps, is what our Sages had in mind when they cancelled Shofar blowing on Rosh Hashanah when it coincides with a Sabbath:

The need for a Shofar is primarily for one who is engaged in weekday experiences, for whom everything is defined by those experiences. The Shofar serves to awaken, alert, cajole, jolt and inspire us to awaken from our reverie—insofar as *Shabbos* dimensions of life are concerned.

When Rosh Hashanah is informed and defined by the *Shabbos*, however, the message to us differs from other years. It says to us: when our orientation is a Sabbatical one, when the *Shabbos* defines us, we no longer need the Shofar to awaken us. *Shabbos* represents the height of awareness and sensitivity to all that is spiritual and G-dly.

A Caveat

There is a caveat to this, however. The Talmud tells us that in the days when the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, they did sound the Shofar in the Temple itself on *Shabbos*!

One would have thought that in such a holy environment the status of *Shabbos* would have been magnified and there would certainly not be a need to sound the Shofar there.

Why then would they sound the Shofar on *Shabbos* in the Holy Temple itself?

The answer is that when we reach that high of a spiritual level, the Shofar assumes a much higher objective. No longer is the Shofar needed to awaken us, but it becomes the instrument that can elevate us to even higher levels of holiness that even transcend the *Shabbos*.

The Two Features of the SHofar

One of the symbols associated with the future Redemption, is that it will be ushered in with the sounding of the Shofar. This Shofar has been said to possess the two distinct features referred to above:

On the one hand, the Shofar will awaken all of us—weekday oriented souls—who are so ensconced in the exile constraining state of mind that inhibits our spiritual lives. On the other hand, this Shofar will also speak to the *Shabbos* personalities in our midst—and to the *Shabbos* personality that we all possess at least in a latent state.

This Messianic Shofar will touch us in ways that are unprecedented, because they will reveal untapped energy and enable us to rise to much higher and more exciting levels, even higher and more delightful than the *Shabbos* experience.

May we all be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year, when we will all experience true peace and ultimate Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

ESSAY TWENTY-THREE

HAPPY "TWO" YEAR

The weekly Sabbath primarily speaks to our relationship with G-d.

The Sabbatical year, by contrast, extends to our relationship with others as well. All of our produce (in the Land of Israel) must be left *Hefker* (free for all) to take and we may no longer collect the money owed to us (without a *Pruzbol*). This helped the poor to breath freely.

Shabbos is disengagement from the rough edges of life.

Shabbos is also disengagement from our obsession with ourselves; to being open to the needs and interests of others.

ESSAY TWENTY-THREE
HAPPY "TWO" YEAR

A Double Year of Shabbos

Why is this Rosh Hashanah different from all Rosh Hashanah's of the past thirteen years?

This Rosh Hashanah has a double Sabbatical theme associated with it. In addition to its being the beginning of a Sabbatical year (the end of seven year cycle, at which time all agricultural activity in Israel must cease) , the first day of Rosh Hashanah also occurs on a *Shabbos*.

The fact that the "head" of the year is a *Shabbos* head, means that this year is guided by and animated with the spirit of *Shabbos*, just as the head controls the rest of the body

The fact that this new year, 5761, is associated with **two** forms of *Shabbos* not only means that the theme of *Shabbos* should be underscored this year, but, moreover,

this year our lives should be informed by **two** dimensions of *Shabbos*.

[The unique message and inspiration of this year does not cease with the end of this year. It continues, albeit with less fanfare.]

Endless

It should be noted that our Sages considered dual and repetitive expressions in the Torah to be signs of Redemption. When a word is repeated, it suggests that the idea contained in that word is not confined to a single and finite form, but must be expanded and "liberated" from its narrow context.

If repetition is a general symbol of liberation, it is particularly true about the *Shabbos* duality this year. For, indeed, *Shabbos* itself is associated with and portends the Redemption; a time that is characterized by peace, delight and holiness (Read: Sabbatical) existence.

Thus, by defining this year as a dual *Shabbos* year, it means that we must anticipate the Redemption even more than usual, by living our lives in a "dual" Sabbatical fashion.

A Study in Contrasts

To understand the unique "dual Sabbatical" message of this Rosh Hashanah, let us reflect on one salient difference between the weekly Sabbath and the Sabbatical year. Whereas the weekly Sabbath is far more encompassing in the degree of rest it demands of us than the Sabbatical year counterpart, the weekly Sabbath primarily speaks to our relationship with G-d.

The Sabbatical year, by contrast, extends to our relationship with others as well. Firstly, during the Sabbatical year all of our produce (In the Land of Israel) must be left *Hefker* (free for all) to take. Anyone may enter our fields and take whatever they need. And secondly, during the Sabbatical year all of the debts are canceled. Consequently, we may no longer collect the money owed to us (unless a special provision called a *Pruzbol* was enacted, in which our debts are handed over to the courts). This helped the poor and the needy, who were inundated with debt, to breath freely.

This year's Rosh Hashanah thus conveys a dual Sabbatical message. *Shabbos* is, first and foremost, disengagement from the rough edges of life, when we allow our soul to disengage itself from the earth and earthly matters. The *Shabbos* theme is also about disengagement from our

obsession with ourselves; to being open to the needs and interests of others. In simple terms this means that this year we should simultaneously focus on our relationship with G-d, as well as on our relationship with our fellow. And the preoccupation with one should not compromise the integrity of the other.

Day and Year of Delight

Shabbos is, however, more than just disengagement from our materialistic and selfish interests. *Shabbos* is also a day of delight. Translated into the "Sabbatical" way we must endeavor to live our lives this year, the fulfillment of our dual responsibilities must be permeated with a sense of delight and joy. Merely living free and unencumbered without a concomitant feeling of joy and delight instilled in what we do, does not capture the full spirit of the *Shabbos*.

There is also one more characteristic of *Shabbos* that must be instilled in our Sabbatical lives this year. *Shabbos* is a holy day; when even our meals are considered to be a Mitzvah imbued with holiness. This translates into a year in which we feel closer to G-d in all of what we do.

Every Shabbos is a sample and taste of the future eternal Sabbath of the Messianic Age. When the Sabbatical theme is double, as it is this year, it is an even more powerful taste of the future.

May we all be blessed with a *Kesiva VaChasima Tova* (Inscribed and sealed for a good year); *Shanah Tova U'Mesukah* (A good and sweet year) and a year permeated with the dual spirit of *Shabbos*; a year of Redemption.